

Communicating with  
Families: *Strategies for  
Challenging Conversations*

# Participant Handout





## Communicating with Families: Strategies for Challenging Conversations Participant Agenda

Being able to recognize when a family needs support is important. But, whether or not they get it, is often impacted by how we, as service providers communicate with them. This interactive workshop assists participants with having difficult and challenging conversations. Participants will gain insights about communicating effectively with parents / caregivers and families.

Participants will:

- Practice effective communication skills and develop action plans for implementing them with parents/caregivers and families.
- Learn about communicating with parents / caregivers and families by understanding your own communication style.
- Learn about the components of active listening and the filters and barriers of effective communication.
- Understand the power of appreciative and clarifying questions in relationship building.
- Gain a greater understanding of the key role of attitude, awareness and energy in relationship building and communication.

Activity	Learning Objectives / Purpose
Welcome & Introduction	Welcome & Introductions
Communication Components	Explore the three components when communicating and the impact they have on how information is received.
Are you a good communicator?	Discuss and explore what would people say about how well you communicate. Take the Basic Listening Skills Self-Assessment
Flow of communication builds relationships	Understand that communication is a two-way street and the key to building relationships.
Communication 101	Review and discuss the elements of Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's good and effective communication skills?</li> <li>• The Keys to Active Listening and activity</li> <li>• What is Empathic Listening?</li> <li>• Listening for understanding</li> <li>• Shift your Position</li> <li>• Communication Filters and Barriers</li> <li>• Surface Structure vs. Deep Structure of words</li> <li>• The Power of Questions</li> </ul>
Trixie vs. Elsie	Explore how attitude, awareness and energy play a key role in how we communicate and approach situations.
Closing Activity	Commit to strategies that will assist in communicating effectively with parents and families.



# Basic Listening Skills – Self Assessment

To evaluate your listening skills, answer the questions below. Your response will not be shared with anyone unless you choose to share it. Be as objective as possible.

#		Almost Always	Usually	Seldom	Never
1	Do you let people finish what they are trying to say before you speak?	4	3	2	1
2	If the person hesitates, do you try to encourage him/her rather than starting to reply?	4	3	2	1
3	Can you listen fully even though you think you know what he/she is about to say?	4	3	2	1
4	Can you listen non-judgmentally even if you don't like or disagree with the person whose talking?	4	3	2	1
5	Do you stop what you're doing and give full attention when listening?	4	3	2	1
6	Do you give the person appropriate eye contact, head nod, and non-verbals to indicate that you're listening?	4	3	2	1
7	Do you listen fully regardless of the speaker's manner of speaking?	4	3	2	1
8	Do you question the person to clarify his/her ideas more fully?	4	3	2	1

Add up the circled numbers to get your score and see how you're doing.

SCORE

## Self-Assessment Scoring

# Basic Listening Skills – Self Assessment

Range	Explanation
29-32	Outstanding; truly attentive, trying to listen. Probably have the reputation of being a good listener.
24-28	Very good; with some effort, you could move into the upper range. Probably need more effort put into attention and judgment evaluation.
19-23	Need some work. Identify your lowest self-ratings and ask why you see yourself that way. Does it interfere with your job? What would the payoff be if you could improve?
18 or below	Most of all, ask yourself; was I really serious about this assessment? If you were, then examine your behavior. How are your communications with others? How could it improve/what would you gain if you could answer each question more positively?

## Action Plan

**What steps will you take to improve your listening skills?**

**By when?**

- 
- 
-

# Keys to Active Listening

- **Focus on what the person is saying and not on how you will respond.**
- Paraphrase – restate the speaker's ideas.
- **Reflect the feelings of the speaker in a nonjudgmental way.**
- Acknowledge nonverbally – nod your head, touch or meet with the eyes, in a culturally appropriate way.
- **Listen for meaning. Listen with the heart.**

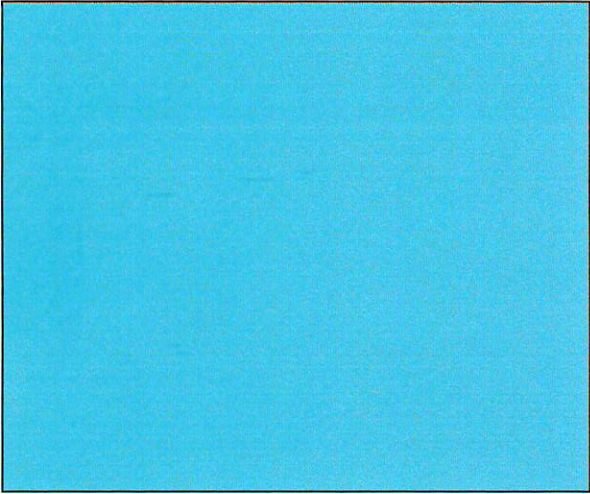




## Helping Stances

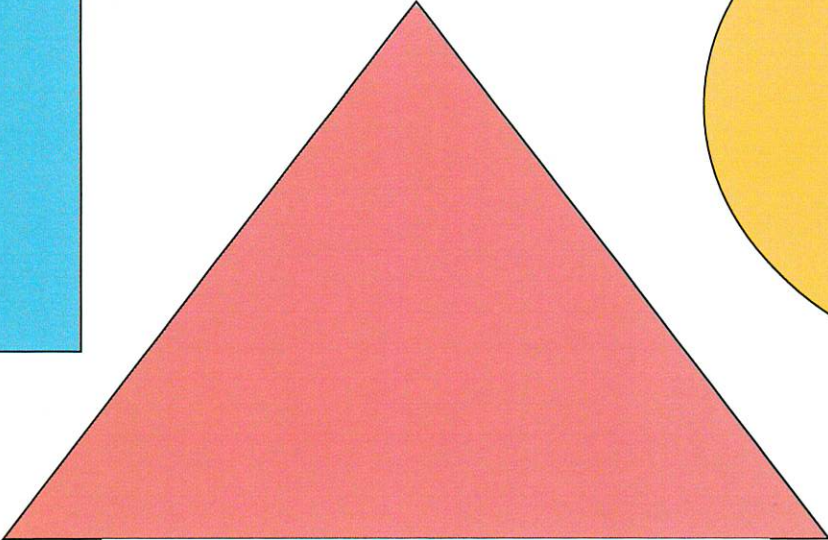
<b>Phenomenal Fixer (Trixie)</b>	<b>Energy Leadership Coach (Elsie)</b>
Sees problems that need to be fixed & challenges that need to be overcome.	Sees opportunities for learning and growth.
Asks closed-ended questions and gives information and advice.	Asks open-ended, empowering questions, one at a time.
Sees self as authority and expert in helping relationship.	Knows everyone has their own answers & is committed to assisting others in finding theirs.
Gathers information to analyze and develop a plan.	Is curious and open, interested in where the discussion will go and what will emerge.
Listens selectively & analytically.	Listens comprehensively and intuitively.
Is interested and willing to deploy their own resources and networks to assist others.	Focuses on assisting client to expand his or her own resources and networks.
Gets frustrated if the other does not take advice and act on it.	Encourages accountability to client's own goals.
Invested in client's outcomes.	Invested in and trusts coaching process (and that outcomes will flow from there).
Selectively uses negative energy to get things done.	Strives to be positive all the time in all interactions.
Uses own language and teaches it to others.	Uses other's language.

# Communicating with Families Closing Activity



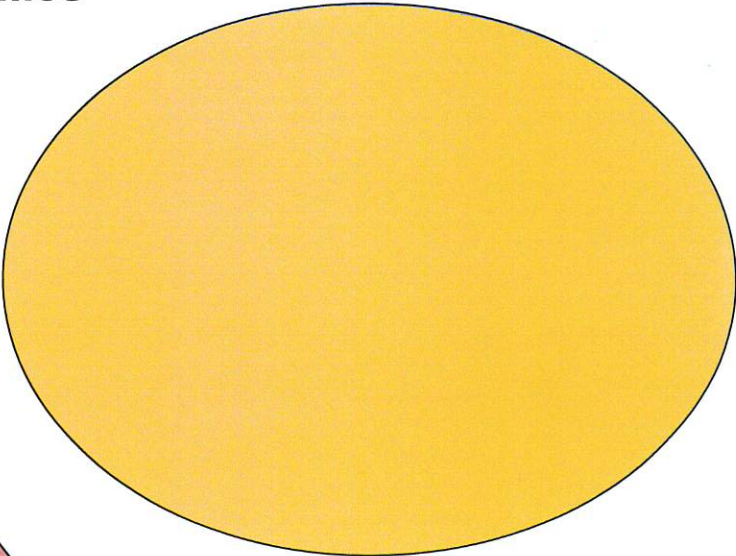
**Square**

*Something in the training that "squared" with what they already thought*



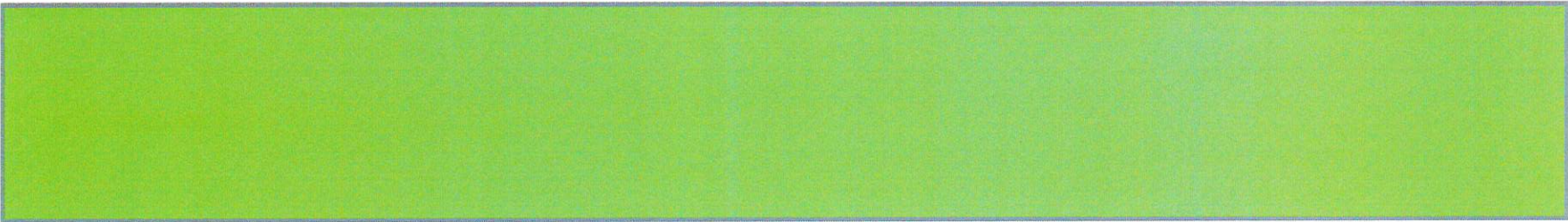
**Triangle**

*Something in the training that made them view communication from a new angle*



**Circle**

*A new piece of information that completed or "closed the circle" for them*



*Action or new approach you will take*



## **Communicating with Families**

### **Action Plan**

**I can improve my communication processes by:**

**To improve my communication with the parents I work with I will ...**