

# Clinical Guidelines for “Just the Facts – Effective Communication”

## OVERVIEW:

The handout for this topic is designed to provide a rationale for why improving communication can be important for families with a member dealing with psychosis, as well as strategies to do so. Role-play and home practice are especially important here.

### Goals

1. Remind participants of the cognitive challenges that usually are found in psychosis, so that they are motivated to work on improving their communication.
2. Remind participants that conflict and tension typically are reduced when communication is good.
3. Offer clear strategies to improve communication, using the guidelines in the text.
4. Have each family member practice at least one communication skill in the session.

### Materials Needed

1. Educational Handout: Just the Facts–Effective Communications
2. Pointers for Good Communication (make a poster of pointers from handout or a large copy of pointers which can be seen by all)

## TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- Remind families that compensating for cognitive deficits from psychosis is the primary reason for improving family communication.
- Discuss the pointers for good communication broadly and then give specifics.
- Reinforce any positive communication you see in the session.
- Set up behavioral rehearsals so each participant practices at least one communication skill—two is even better. Make sure each person:
  - Does at least two rounds of practice on each skill he/she chooses.
  - Gets positive feedback first from other family members then from you after the first practice.

- Receives one suggestion for change (“One thing you might try to make the role play even better is. . . .”) before the second practice
  - Practices the role play again.
  - Receives more positive feedback.
- Elicit a strong rationale from participants about why home practice is critical to learning new skills.

## **TIPS FOR COMMON PROBLEMS:**

- The participant says, “We talk just fine.” Acknowledge the strength of the participant’s communication skills, but again offer the rationale that extra skill is required because of the situation.
- Participants can be reluctant to do role-plays— you should do the first one, move fast, and give lots of praise for ANY efforts.
- If families are engaged but need more help with their communication, consider offering them a second session of communication skills.
- Be alert to cultural differences; modify guidance as needed by openly discussing issues with family.

## **THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF THE SESSION:**

Encourage participants to be “brief, clear, and specific” in their speech.

## **EVALUATING GAINS:**

- After completing the handout for this topic area, it may be helpful to assess how much knowledge the participants have retained about communication. You can assess a participant’s knowledge using the following questions:
  1. What are three of the key points to good communication?
  2. Why is sharpening up good communication vital in families dealing with psychosis?