

**WHAT DID YOU SAY?  
DEALING WITH  
COMMUNICATION  
CHALLENGES**

# OBJECTIVES

- Describe how communication is affected by aging changes including chronic illnesses.
- Identify ways we can enhance communication when we understand limitations that exist.

# WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

“a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behavior”

“an act or instance of transmitting information”

# BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS

- ⦿ All behavior has meaning
- ⦿ All behavior is communication
- ⦿ All communication affects behavior
- ⦿ Meaning is based on individual perceptions
- ⦿ Meanings are influenced by the social environment

# COMMUNICATION IS INFLUENCED BY...

- ⦿ How we are taught to interact
- ⦿ Beliefs, values, morals
- ⦿ Culture, ethnic group
- ⦿ Feelings, attitudes
- ⦿ Age, gender
- ⦿ Family, community

# FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

- Nonverbal (70%)
- Verbal (30%)

# NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- ◉ Facial expression
- ◉ Feeling, attitude, mood
- ◉ Action or lack of action
- ◉ Posture
- ◉ Eye contact
- ◉ Gestures
- ◉ Use of space in relation to other person
- ◉ Touch
- ◉ Writing

# NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- ◉ Sends message of fear
  - Darting eyes
  - Tight muscles
  - Jumpy
  - Picking
  - Nausea
  - Sleep



## ◎ Sends message of anger

- Frowning
- Clenched Fists
- Rapid Movements
- Turning Away
- Throwing Things
- Yelling
- Cursing
- Threats

## ○ Sends message of Joy

- Smiling
- Turning Towards
- Reaching Out
- Laughing
- Talkative
- Kissing, Hugging
- Stroking

# VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- **Attention to:**
  - Tone of voice
  - Tempo of speech
  - Words chosen

# ACTIVE LISTENING

- ◉ Face the person with relaxed posture
- ◉ Make eye contact
- ◉ Keep a comfortable distance
- ◉ Facial expression to show interest
- ◉ Allow time for person to process and respond
- ◉ Use silence while maintaining attention
- ◉ Use speech to show you are listening, expressing kindness, respect and acceptance
- ◉ Ask questions to clarify

# CHANGES THAT CAN AFFECT COMMUNICATION

## ○ Normal Aging

- Hearing Loss: 40% of those over the age of 75 who live in the community, 90% for those living in institutions
- Vision Loss: Visual perceptual change affect reading, perception of facial expression and lip movements
- Behavior Slowing: Decreased reaction time, more time needed to sensory information to be transmitted and received, slowed decision making, slow motor movements

# CHANGES THAT CAN AFFECT COMMUNICATION

- ◉ Movement disorders such as Parkinson's
- ◉ Stroke with motor impairment and aphasia, expressive and receptive
- ◉ Dementia

# COMMUNICATION SYMPTOMS

## Aphasia

- expressive - difficulty expressing thoughts and feelings in words
- receptive - difficulty understand spoken and/or written words

## Anomia

- Struggles to find the right word

## Circumstantial

- Never comes to the point

## Tangential

- Conversation wanders with no conclusion

## Mute

- No longer able to use language

# HOW TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- ◉ Minimize distractions
- ◉ Look directly at person
- ◉ Allow extra time and pace conversation
- ◉ Keep it simple
- ◉ Short sentences and simple words
- ◉ Observe for discomfort
- ◉ Be honest as possible



# TASK FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

- ◉ Giving Information - Time for medication
- ◉ Asking for information - Use yes or no questions - Are you in pain?
- ◉ Giving instructions - Stand up please
- ◉ Explain what you are going to do - I am going to help you dress
- ◉ Plan that the person will forget
- ◉ Use positive wording and gestures
- ◉ Model the desired behavior
- ◉ Take a break and try again

# EMOTION FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

## ⦿ Assess

- Nonverbal communication - crying, pacing, furrowed brow, combative, cursing

## ⦿ Listen for emotionally focused words

- I need to go home?
- I have to find my mother?

# EMOTION FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

- ⦿ Remain calm - person will “read” nonverbals
- ⦿ Validate emotions - “You seem upset”, “Tell me what’s wrong”
- ⦿ Express caring - soft voice tone, use of words and facial expression, touch if this seems appropriate
- ⦿ Accept the person’s reality
- ⦿ Don’t argue, defend or criticize - “You shouldn’t feel this way”, “That’s not right”

# DISCUSSION OF EXPERIENCES

- ⦿ How do you respond to anxiety and confusion?
- ⦿ How do you respond to anger and feeling threatened?
- ⦿ How do you respond to demands on time when you are in a hurry?
- ⦿ How do you respond to crying?