

Techniques Help Assure Good Communication with Adolescents

Create a good, friendly first impression

- ☐ Start on time; don't make the client wait.
- ☐ Smile and warmly greet the client.
- ☐ Introduce yourself and what you do.
- ☐ Ask her/his name and what s/he likes to be called.

Establish rapport during the first session

- ☐ Face the adolescent, sitting in similar chairs.
- ☐ Use the adolescent's name during the session.
- ☐ Demonstrate a frank and honest willingness to understand and help.
- ☐ Begin the session by allowing the adolescent to talk freely before asking directive questions.
- ☐ Congratulate the adolescent for seeking help.

Eliminate barriers to good communication

- ☐ Avoid judgmental responses of body or spoken language.
- ☐ Respond with impartiality, respecting the adolescent's beliefs, opinions, and diversity or expression regarding her/his sexuality.

Use "active listening" with the client

- ☐ Show your sincere interest and understanding, and give your full attention to the client.
- ☐ Sit comfortably; avoid movements that might distract the adolescent.
- ☐ Put yourself in the place of the adolescent while s/he speaks.
- ☐ Be more aware of the problem without being intrusive or taking away her/his control over the issue.
- ☐ Observe the tone of voice, words used, and body language expressed, and reflect verbally to underscore and confirm observed feelings.
- ☐ Give the adolescent some time to think, ask questions, and speak. Be silent when necessary, and follow the rhythm of the conversation.
- ☐ Periodically repeat what you've heard, confirming that both you and the adolescent have understood.
- ☐ Clarify terms that are not clear or need more interpretation.

Provide information simply

☐ **Use an appropriate tone of voice.**

- Speak in an understandable way, avoiding technical terms or difficult words.
 - ☐ Understand and use where appropriate the terms/expressions adolescents use to talk about their bodies, dating, and sex.
 - ☐ Use short sentences.
 - ☐ Do not overload the adolescent with information.
 - ☐ Provide information based on what the adolescent knows or has heard.
 - ☐ Gently correct misconceptions.
 - ☐ Use audiovisual materials to help the adolescent understand the information and to demonstrate information in more concrete terms.

Ask appropriate and effective questions

- ☐ Use a tone that shows interest, attention, and friendliness.
- ☐ Begin sessions with easy questions, gradually moving up to more difficult questions.
- ☐ Try not to take notes except in a structured interview that has an established order for special cases.
- ☐ Ask one question at a time and wait for the response.
- ☐ Ask open-ended questions that permit varied responses and require thought. Allow for explanations of feelings or concerns.

Examples: “How can I help you?” and “What’s your family like?”

- ☐ Ask in-depth questions in response to a previous question and to solicit more information.

Example: “Can you explain that better?”

- ☐ Avoid biased questions that can direct the client’s response.

Example: “Have you heard that the condom makes sex less pleasurable?”

- ☐ Avoid questions that begin with the word “Why” since the adolescent may think you are blaming her/him.
- ☐ Ask the same question in different ways if you think the adolescent has not understood.

Recognize and take advantage of teachable moments

- ☐ Use a positive approach when discussing developmental change.
- ☐ Evaluate learning by asking the adolescent to describe a healthy RH behavior that s/he is practicing.
- ☐ Reinforce health messages from other settings.
- ☐ Provide printed or other materials that are developmentally and culturally appropriate.
- ☐ Provide practical advice, encouragement, and factual information.
- ☐ Don't underestimate the potential usefulness or effectiveness of education and counseling.

Source: Levenberg, P. and A. Elster. 1995. *Guidelines for Adolescent Preventive Services (GAPS)*. Chicago: American Medical Association