

Watch and Listen to Non-Verbal Signals To Improve Communication



Description

Watch and listen closely to notice facial expressions, natural gestures and sounds. Also notice whether the person is alert, what they are paying attention to at the moment and whether they seem to understand what you are saying. Try to interpret what their sounds and actions might mean.

Who May Benefit?

- This strategy may benefit people who have difficulty expressing themselves, including those who are unable to speak due to weakness or mechanical support (e.g., intubation) and during infancy or the final stages of life.

Tips

- Pay close attention to the person when you are caring for them.
- People send many unclear messages about how they feel, what they like and their interests with their eye gaze, facial expressions and body movements.
- They may grunt, raise their eyebrows, rub their eyes, shrug their shoulders, or reach or try to grab things they want.
- Ask the family how they know what the person likes, wants or doesn't like.
- Develop a simple gesture dictionary that indicates what the person may be doing, what it may mean and what you can do (e.g., Susan might rub her eyes. This might mean that she is tired.)
- People will begin to use natural gestures and sounds more often when they realize that you will respond to them in a predictable manner.
- Confirm that you are receiving accurate messages.

MESSAGE IN

-You notice that the person looks at things they want.

MESSAGE OUT

- Grunts and grimaces to indicate discomfort.
- Looks at water when thirsty.

CHECKING IN

- "Your rubbing your eyes. I think that means you're tired. Do you want to go to bed?"

