



Choosing Life: Empowerment, Action, Results!

CLEAR: Core Skill Session 4
Exploring Different Types of Communication

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CLEAR: Core Skill Session 4

Exploring Different Types of Communication

(70 Minutes)

Session Aims:

- To learn key components of assertive communication and identify differences between aggressive, assertive, and passive communication.
- To practice using assertive communication through role-plays.
- To learn and practice a relaxation technique.

Summary of Activities:

Check-In (10 minutes)

- The purposes of this activity are to set a positive tone for the session, create a safe environment, increase self-esteem, and shape positive behaviors. Goals set during the previous session are reviewed, and the activities and purposes of the session are outlined.

How is Communication Related to F-T-D? (10 minutes)

- The client learns how to relate communication to the F-T-D framework.

What are Different Types of Communication? (25 minutes)

- The client learns the difference between aggressive, assertive, and passive communication styles and identifies the key components of assertive communication.

How Can I Apply Assertive Communication in My Life? (10 minutes)

- The client identifies areas in his or her life where assertive communication can be applied effectively and practices using it.

How Can I Relax? (5 minutes)

- The client learns and practices a relaxation technique.

What's Next? (10 minutes)

- The purposes of this activity are to reinforce today's learning, set weekly goals, and to motivate the client to return to the next session by wrapping up on a positive note.

Required Materials: Core Skill Session 4

Handouts

- Assertive Communication
- Relaxation Sequence: On the Beach

Worksheets

- F-T-D Grid

Wall Charts

- Feeling Thermometer
- Guidelines for Goal Setting
- SMART Problem-Solving Guidelines

Laminated Cards and Additional Items

- Role-Play Script: The Next Appointment

Materials Needed in Every Core Skill Session

- Client Workbook
- Goal Card
- Handout: Guidelines for Goal Setting
- Worksheet: Goal Log

Activity 1: Check-In

Time

- 10 Minutes

Activity Materials

- Worksheet: Goal Log

Counselor Note

The purposes of this activity are to set a positive tone for the session, create a safe environment, increase self-esteem, and to shape positive behaviors. Goals set during the previous session are reviewed and the activities and purposes of the session are outlined.

Goal Check-In

- ▶ **Welcome back! Let's start off by sharing the positive steps you've taken over the past week.**
- ▶ **These positive steps might include the progress you made on your goals, something beneficial you did for yourself, or an important insight you gained about your thoughts, feelings, or behavior.**

Engage the client in a discussion. Encourage the client to report progress on the two goals set at the end of the last session:

1. A short-term weekly goal that supports accomplishment of the client's long-term life goal identified during Core Skill Session 2.
2. A short-term weekly goal that relates to the last session's topic and supports the client's prevention goal.

In response to accomplished goals:

- Praise the client's efforts and success.
- Relate the accomplished goal to the F-T-D framework.

In response to unaccomplished goals:

- Praise any small effort and approximations to achieving the goal.
 - ◆ In order to maintain a safe and non-judgmental environment and in response to clients who may lose their motivation by not having accomplished their goals, positively reframe the unaccomplished goal (i.e., “You did not accomplish your goal because you were trying to take care of yourself by not creating more stress.”).
 - ◆ Model goal setting by suggesting that perhaps the “right” goal was not chosen the previous week (e.g., “Maybe the goal was too difficult or could not realistically be accomplished within the designated time frame.”). Use this as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of setting realistic goals in order to optimize success.
- Identify barrier(s) to goal accomplishment and apply SMART Problem-Solving steps to any barrier(s).
- Relate the unaccomplished goal to the F-T-D framework.

Record the client’s progress against each goal in the client’s workbook.

Introduction to Today’s Session

Introduce today’s session.

- ▶ **I see you’ve been working really hard. Unless there is something pressing that you feel we need to discuss today, let me introduce today’s session topic to you.**
- ▶ **Remember that our sessions are about looking at how our feelings, thoughts, and actions are related to each other. Understanding how our feelings, thoughts, and actions affect each other can help us to make healthy choices, to think and act like our Ideal Self, to have less stress, and to protect ourselves and other people from transmitting or acquiring HIV or STIs.**
- ▶ **Today, we are going to talk about communication. It is important to think about the way we communicate with others because the way we communicate can help us resolve conflicts, stand up for what we need, and get what we want. Communication affects many parts of life. For example, it plays a big role in our relationships with friends, family members, health care providers, sexual partners, landlords, employers, and co-workers.**

Introduction to Today's Session - *continued*

- ▶ **Today we will spend time looking into three types of communication and when each one is appropriate to use. We will explore ways you can stand up for your needs that will increase the chance that you stay safe and healthy, get what you want, and reach your life goals. Toward the end of our session, we will learn a new relaxation technique that will help you communicate effectively.**
- ▶ **Any questions before we get started?**

Answer any questions the client raises.

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Activity 2: How is Communication Related to Feelings, Thoughts, and Actions?

Time

- 10 minutes

Activity Materials

- Worksheet: F-T-D Grid

Counselor Note

The client learns how to relate communication to the F-T-D framework.

Communication Styles

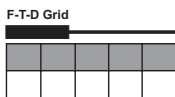
Begin a discussion of different communication styles. Ask the client for an example of a recent attempt at communication that did not go well.

- ▶ **Let’s talk about communication styles.**
- ▶ **Please think of a recent situation involving communication with someone that did not go well. I’m looking for a conversation or situation that made you uncomfortable and gave you a reading of 60 or more on the Feeling Thermometer. Is there an example you can think of?**

Distribute the F-T-D Grid worksheet. As the client describes the situation, use the following questions to complete the grid.

- ▶ **Where were you on the Feeling Thermometer in the beginning of the situation or conversation? What were your body reactions? What were you thinking?**

Point out where distorted thoughts and a high Feeling Thermometer reading may have contributed to the conversation not going well and the client’s needs not being met.




For example:

Distorted thoughts (e.g., “He never listens to me.”) could contribute to a high Feeling Thermometer reading. A high Feeling Thermometer reading often prevents one from assertively communicating their needs. A high Feeling Thermometer may lead to passive or aggressive communication.

Point out how the client’s Feeling Thermometer reading may have increased as the conversation or situation progressed. It is helpful to complete the F-T-D grid for different segments of the conversation in order to illustrate how the client may have become more and more uncomfortable as the conversation progressed.

Emphasize the importance of the client catching himself or herself when his or her Feeling Thermometer reading is relatively low (below 60) and intervening at that point by applying **CLEAR** Thoughts (e.g., positive self-talk, reframing, and arguing against negative thoughts) and actions (e.g., deep breathing). By taking steps to keep his or her Feeling Thermometer reading low, the client could have remained comfortable enough to deal effectively with the situation.

Activity 3: What are Different Types of Communication?

Time

- 25 minutes

Activity Materials

- Blank notebook paper
- Handout: Assertive Communication
- Role-Play Script: The Next Appointment

Counselor Note

The client learns the difference between aggressive, assertive, and passive communication styles and identifies the key components of assertive communication.

Types of Communication

- ▶ **Communication can be one of three types: aggressive, assertive, and passive. Let's figure out what each means.**

On a sheet of paper, make three columns labeled:

- Aggressive
- Passive
- Assertive

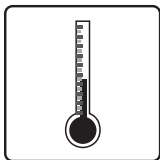
Aggressive Communication

Define aggressive communication.

- ▶ **Aggressive communication is communication that is disrespectful of other people. It's a communication style in which you stand up for your rights but violate the rights of others.**

Generate a list of the characteristics of aggressive communication by the client the following questions. Write the client's responses in the "Assertive" column on the sheet of paper.

- **How can you tell when someone is being aggressive?**
- **What is tone of voice would the person use?**
- **How would a person use aggressive communication to say, "I want you to stop."?**
- **What would the person's volume be like?**
- **What would the person's posture be like?**
- **What is the person's breathing like?**
- **What about eye contact?**
- **Are there other non-verbal signals of aggressive communication (e.g., the person coming into your "space")?**
- **Where do you think a person's Feeling Thermometer is when aggressive communication is over?**



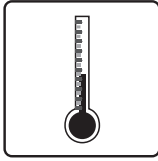
Passive Communication

Define passive communication.

- ▶ **Passive communication is a style in which you put the rights of others before your own, minimizing your own self worth. A passive communicator will often go without having his or her needs met rather than rock the boat by asking.**

Generate a list of the characteristics of passive communication by asking the client the following questions. Write the client's responses in the "Passive" column on the sheet of paper.

- **How can you tell when someone is being passive?**
- **What is tone of voice would the person use?**
- **How would a person use passive communication to say, "I want you to stop."?**
- **What would the person's volume be like?**
- **What would the person's posture be like?**
- **What is the person's breathing like?**
- **What about eye contact?**



Passive Communication - *continued*

- Are there other non-verbal signals of passive communication (e.g., the person coming into your “space”)?
- Where do you think a person’s Feeling Thermometer is when passive communication is over?

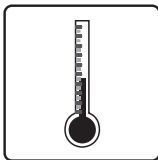
Assertive Communication

Define assertive communication.

- ▶ **Assertive communication is communication in which you stand up for your own needs while also being concerned and respectful about the needs of the other person.**

Generate a list of the characteristics of assertive communication by asking the client the following questions. Write the client’s responses in the “Passive” column on the sheet of paper.

- How can you tell when someone is being assertive?
- What is tone of voice would the person use?
- How would a person use assertive communication to say, “I want you to stop.”?
- What would the person’s volume be like?
- What would the person’s posture be like?
- What is the person’s breathing like?
- What about eye contact?
- Are there other non-verbal signals of assertive communication (e.g., the person coming into your “space”)?
- Where do you think a person’s Feeling Thermometer is when assertive communication is over?

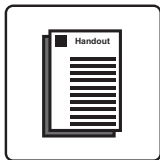


Refer the client back to the example of recent communication that did not go well. Ask the client to identify the types of communication that were used.

- ▶ **Let’s look at the situation you shared with me a few minutes ago to see what type of communication was used.**

Ask the client the following questions:

- **What was the tone of voice of the parties involved? Did your voice or the other person's get louder or softer?**
- **What was your posture like? How about the other person's?**
- **What was your breathing like?**
- **How did your pulse feel?**
- **What type of eye contact was maintained?**
- **How did you the rest of your body feel?**
- **Were there other non-verbal signals that you noticed?**
- **How physically close were the two of you during the encounter? Was personal space violated or maintained?**



Distribute the Assertive Communication handout and review it with the client.

- ▶ **Let's review this handout on assertiveness to make sure that we covered what it means to be assertive. This is for you to refer to in the future if you need it.**

Assertive Communication

- I. The first component of assertive communication is "What to Say."
 1. Use "I" statements.
 - ◆ Put your comments in terms of "I want" or "I need."
 - ◆ DO NOT use "you should."
 2. State what you need or want.
 - ◆ Let the other person know what you want them to do.
 - ◆ Avoid misunderstandings.
 - ◆ Don't assume another person can read your mind.
- II. The second component of assertive communication is "How to Say It."
 1. Say something positive.
 - ◆ It puts people in a better frame of mind.
 - ◆ They won't be defensive.

Assertive Communication - *continued*

2. Listen to the other person and show you understand.
 - ◆ It helps when others think you can put yourself in their shoes.
 - ◆ It can change your own point of view.
3. Provide information they need to know.
 - ◆ You may know more about what is important to you than they do.
 - ◆ Tell them what you think is important and give them the information they want.
4. State your feelings in a non-hostile way.
 - ◆ If a conversation is not going well with another person, name the feeling, communicate it, and explain it.
 - ◆ Anger usually comes when you are feeling uncomfortable – more than a reading of 60 on the Feeling Thermometer. Try to communicate the feelings that you may be experiencing, such as frustration, hurt, rejection fear, or anxiety, when your Feeling Thermometer reading is still low.
 - ◆ When a person's Feeling Thermometer reading is over 60 and he or she is feeling angry, it is common for that person to end up attacking the other person and communicating a blaming message.
 - ◆ Your interactions will go more smoothly if you communicate the feelings before they become too uncomfortable, and before they lead to anger.

▶ **Do you have any questions about assertive communication?**

Answer questions.

- ▶ **Overall, assertiveness means standing up for your own needs while also being concerned and respectful about the needs of the other person.**



- ▶ What makes assertive communication an especially effective means of speaking with another person? Standing up for your own needs in a clear and respectful way will increase the chance that you will
 - Get what you want.
 - Reach your life goals.

Scripted Role-Play

Introduce the scripted role-play.

- ▶ I would like us to read a script together to illustrate an example of a person with HIV making a doctor's appointment. Please listen to see whether or not this is assertive communication, and if the patient stands up for his or her own needs while also being concerned for and respectful of the needs of the other person.
- ▶ You read the role of the receptionist. I'll take the part of the patient.

The client and counselor read the script out loud.

Scripted Role-Play: Patient and Receptionist

Receptionist: Your next appointment will be on Friday at 8:30 am.

Patient: I can't come at that time. I need a Wednesday appointment in the afternoon.

Receptionist: Look, we are trying to squeeze you in.

Patient: I appreciate that. Wednesday is the best day for me.

Receptionist: The doctor isn't here then. He's always off on Wednesday afternoon.

Patient: OK, so, he's off on Wednesdays. I'm sure he needs a rest. Well, Monday is the next best day for me—mornings.

Receptionist: I'd have to check on that. A lot of people who have problems over the weekend want to come in on Monday mornings.

Scripted Role-Play - *continued*

Patient: I feel frustrated not being able to get a time that is good for both of us.

Receptionist: Well, all right. We'll make it on Monday the 22nd at 9 in the morning.

Patient: Thank you. I feel better. That's good. I'll see you on Monday the 22nd.

The End

- ▶ Was this an example of assertive communication?
- ▶ What made it so?
- ▶ Are there situations when being aggressive is appropriate?

Wait for the client to give you some responses.

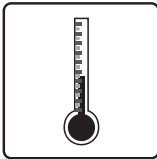
- ▶ Are there situations when being passive is appropriate?

Wait for the client to give you some responses.

Use the Feeling Thermometer to assess the client's optimal reading for effective assertive communication.

- ▶ Where do you think you need to be on the Feeling Thermometer for you to use assertive communication effectively?
- ▶ What can you do to maintain that Feeling Thermometer reading and communicate assertively?
- ▶ Keeping your Ideal Self characteristics in mind, what CLEAR Thoughts can you say to yourself to keep your Feeling Thermometer reading from going up?
- ▶ What positive actions can you take?

Refer to the client's ideal Feeling Thermometer reading for effective assertive communication in subsequent sessions.



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Activity 4: How Can I Apply Assertive Communication in My Life?

Time

- 10 minutes

Activity Materials

- none

Counselor Note

The client identifies areas in his or her life where assertive communication can be applied effectively and practices using it.

Work with the client to practice assertive communication.

- ▶ **Assertiveness means standing up for your own needs while also being concerned and respectful of the needs of the other person.**
- ▶ **Now I want to give you a chance to do a role-play to practice using assertive communication.**



Unscripted Role-Play

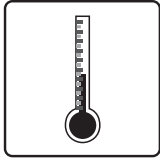
Ask the client to identify a specific situation where he or she would like to apply assertive communication. Conduct the role-play with the client.

- ▶ **Let's come up with a situation in your life where you think you could stand up for your own needs while also being concerned and respectful about the needs of the other person?**

Ask the client to state a specific goal related to the situation (e.g., "I want my partner to take out the trash every night."). This goal should meet the Guidelines for Goal Setting.

- ▶ **Remember to keep your Ideal Self characteristics in mind as you practice being assertive.**

Do the role-play.



Use the Feeling Thermometer to assess the client's comfort level during the role-play.

- ▶ **Where was your Feeling Thermometer reading during the role-play?**
- ▶ **What was one thing that you did that you liked? What was one thing that you would do differently?**
- ▶ **Let me give you some feedback.**
 - **State your own Feeling Thermometer reading during the role-play.**
 - **State one thing that the client did that you liked.**
 - **State one thing that the client could have done differently.**
- ▶ **Assertive communication is a powerful skill. We will practice it during several CLEAR sessions.**

Counselor Note

If the client is unable to identify a situation in his or her life where assertive communication could be useful, the counselor may offer the following situation as way of creating an opportunity for the client to practice assertiveness.

- ▶ **In this role-play, you can play the part of the patient and I will play the part of the nurse. Here is the setting.**
 - **You have been sitting in the doctor's waiting room for an hour.**
 - **Your appointment was for 2:45 and it is now 3:45.**
 - **You are bored and restless.**
 - **It seems to you that patients who came after you have been taken ahead of you.**
 - **Also, you have been getting more colds recently and think the doctor needs to know about it. You are worried this could be the result of an increase in your viral load.**

Counselor Note - *continued*

- **Your goal is to get in and see the doctor as soon as possible.**
- **I'll play the receptionist. My goal is to balance your needs and the doctors'.**

Allow a few minutes for the role-play. When it is finished, obtain feedback.

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Activity 5: How Can I Relax?

Time

- 5 minutes

Activity Materials

- Handout: Relaxation Sequence: On The Beach

Counselor Note

The purposes of this activity are to introduce clients to a relaxation technique and practice applying it in situations involving assertive communication.

Relaxation Exercise

- ▶ **You've worked really hard today. Let's spend some time relaxing.**
- ▶ **Relaxation has been shown to help people deal with uncomfortable situations as well as tension.**
- ▶ **There is even evidence to show that relaxation can strengthen the immune system in people with HIV.**
- ▶ **Right now I want to share with you a technique that can help us relax.**
- ▶ **As I mentioned earlier, this technique may also help you maintain the comfort level you chose on the Feeling Thermometer in order to communicate assertively and get what you want.**



Relaxation Sequence: On The Beach

Get yourself in a comfortable position. *Pause.*

Observe your breathing. *Pause.*

Now, breathe out deeply three times.

One. *Pause.*

Two. *Pause.*

Three. *Pause.*

Close your eyes, if you wish, as we take a little journey.

You are in a little house by the beach. *Pause.*

You open the door to the deck, and, before you can even step outside, the sun greets you warmly.

See how blue the sky is. *Pause.*

Just a few wispy clouds.

Smell the tangy salt air. *Pause.*

You walk to the edge of the deck and step down into the fine white sand.

Feel the warm sand between your toes. *Pause.*

You hear the surf breaking and the sea gulls crying.

See the waves slowly rolling on the shore. *Pause.*

You walk on the soft sand, moving closer to the ocean, and spread your towel.

You sit watching the soothing rhythm of the sea.

Breathe in and out. *Pause.*

In and out. *Pause.*

In and out. *Pause.*

You lie there on the empty beach.

Your whole body becomes one with the sun, waves, sand, and sky.

Can you see the gulls gliding without effort, nodding on the breeze as if they were asleep? *Pause.*

Can you see the gulls gracefully swoop and bank and turn? *Pause.*

Feel the breeze blowing softly, cooling, and cleansing you.

You seem to sink into the sand.

Can you feel your breath becoming deep and slow? *Pause.*

Can you feel your heartbeat--regular, an easy rhythm, strong? *Pause.*

Relaxation Sequence - *continued*

You rest. *Pause.*

You rest a little longer. *Pause.*

Slowly you sit up. *Pause.*

You see a little purple shell carved by the sea, so that it seems to have magical writing on it.

Put it in your pocket.

You stand up. *Pause.*

Walk slowly back to the beach house. *Pause.*

The sand covers your feet and you dig with your toes.

You are almost at the step to the deck.

Step up. *Pause.*

You look back at the ocean feeling so refreshed.

So peaceful. Open the door to the house and go in.

Ask the client how he or she felt about the relaxation.

▶ **How did that relaxation make you feel?**

Encourage comments.

▶ **Here is a copy of that relaxation, so that you can use it at home.**

Give the client a copy of the On the Beach relaxation sequence.



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Activity 6: What's Next?

Time

- 15 minutes

Activity Materials

- Goal Cards
- Handout: Guidelines for Goal Setting
- Worksheet: Goal Log

Counselor Note

The purposes of this activity are to reinforce today's learning, set weekly goals, and to motivate the client to return to the next session by wrapping up on a positive note.

Review of Session Content

Review today's session.

- ▶ **We are at the end of our session. Before we set our weekly goal, I want to review what we learned and share some observations that I noticed about you during the session.**
- ▶ **Today we learned about three types of communication and how each type has its purpose. We spent quite a bit of time on assertive communication, since it is usually the most useful for getting your needs met in a respectful way.**
- ▶ **We ended our discussion on communication with a relaxation technique. Relaxation is useful for releasing tension and self-regulating your emotions so that you can think and act clearly in the moment.**

Praise the client for something positive he or she did during the session. E.g., "I really liked that you engaged in every activity we did today."

Review of Goal Guidelines

Review the Guidelines for Goal Setting.

Guidelines for Goal Setting

- Important to you, and you are committed to it.
- Realistic. Not too hard and not too easy (40-60 on the Feeling Thermometer).
- Brief, specific, and clearly stated.
- Easy to tell when you have accomplished it.

Answer questions and clarify as necessary.

Refer to the client's prevention goal related to core skills.

The client's Ideal Self characteristics, prevention, and life goals should be consistently integrated into weekly short-term goal setting.

The client is encouraged to identify two goals:

1. A short term weekly goal that supports the client's accomplishment of the long-term life goal identified during Core Session 2.
2. A short term weekly goal that relates to today's session topic.

If the client appears to struggle with having two simultaneous goals, the client may select only one goal related to today's session.

Suggestions for Weekly Goals

Give the client suggestions for weekly goals.

- ▶ **Some examples of possible goals for this week could be:**
 - **Identify one concrete situation to use assertive communication to express your needs in a respectful way.**
 - **In potentially stressful situations practice using the Feeling Thermometer to gauge your feelings before, during, and after the situation.**

Suggestions for Weekly Goals - *continued*

- **When your Feeling Thermometer reading goes over 60, practice using a relaxation technique to get your reading down to 40 or lower.**
- **Take a step toward accomplishing your long-term life goal.**

Discuss the goal with the client. Have the client record it on the Weekly Goal Card. Record it on the Prevention Plan in the client's workbook.

- ▶ **I also would like to follow up with you about your life goal. Is there a weekly goal that you would like to set related to your Life Goal? We will review your goal at the beginning of our next session to see how you did.**

Discuss the goal with the client. Have the client record it on the Weekly Goal Card. Record it on the Prevention Plan in the client's workbook.



Closing

Announce the day, date, and time of the next session.

Ask the client to share something he or she got out of, or liked best about today's session. Model this by going first. Acknowledge and praise the client as appropriate.

Have the client identify benefits of participation in **CLEAR**. Ask the client the following questions:

- What did you like most about today's session?
- What did you learn that you can apply to your life?
- What could be improved about today's session?

END OF SESSION