

Communication Skills for Eating Disorders

Building trust is key to engaging a person with an eating disorder. To build trust.....

TAKE CARE TO AVOID THE RIGHTING REFLEX

- As Health Care Professionals we come to our work with a desire to make a positive difference.
- Our instinct is often to want to **FIX THINGS** or to **MAKE IT RIGHT**.
- People with eating disorders are likely ambivalent about recovery. This is because the eating disorder will have a useful function; for example, keeping the person emotionally safe.
- **THE PREMATURE FOCUS TRAP** is when we try to fix things before the person is ready, or before we have fully understood the situation from their perspective.
- **THIS BUILDS RESISTANCE** rather than trust and **CHANGE BECOMES LESS LIKELY**.
- **REMEMBER; IS THIS THEIR GOAL OR MINE?**

INSTEAD FOCUS ON USING PERSON CENTRED SKILLS

- Employ open body language.
- Take a non-judgemental stance.
- Actively listen and provide validation to demonstrate empathy:
 - “Thank you for telling me”.
 - “That sounds really difficult”.
- Be authentic and genuine in your interactions.
- Be curious..... “You mentioned you had a difficult day on Sunday - can tell me more about that?”
- Consider your language carefully.

‘Words are, in my not so humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic. Capable of both inflicting injury and remedying.’



WALKING ALONGSIDE

Resisting the righting reflex is challenging at times especially when people are unwell or ambivalent about recovery.

What do we mean by walking alongside?

- Take the long view
- Develop realistic expectations and aim for improvement, not perfection.
- Support small steps forward and work at the person’s pace
- Expect a bumpy road - relapse is normal
- The journey can be difficult. Be aware of your own emotions and seek supervision where needed.
- **If physical or psychological risks are escalating, discuss with the MDT and agree a plan**



How does this relate to T1DE?

Patients with T1DE have told us that language really matters to them. They have suggested we use alternative phrases which reduce the feeling of being judged:

“Correction”	—————>	“Adjustment”
“Test”	—————>	“Check”
“Not complying”	—————>	“Doing your best”
“Control”	—————>	“Manage”
“Good / bad”	—————>	“In Range / high / low”
“You’re high”	—————>	“Your blood glucose is high”

SCARE
TACTICS
DO NOT
WORK.....