

Conversations that Count: Curbside Consultations

The Importance of Effective Communication in Integrated Care

Communication and teamwork are crucial for health care professional in the successful integration of primary care and behavioral health.

Communicating effectively and building robust care teams help patients feel safe enough to communicate honestly and openly with providers to receive effective treatments. In turn, providers need to communicate effectively with each other to clearly and thoughtfully convey treatment plans, medication adherence guidance, and health education so that patients receive optimal care.

Understanding your communication style, as well as recognizing the styles of those around you, will create space for optimal communication and will also help you tailor your communication style or technique based on the team around you, with the understanding that not everyone is the same.



What is Your Communication Style?⁵



Analyzers, often referred to as thinkers, are focused, task-driven individuals who value logic. They typically prefer policies and planning, are organized, prefer control over chaos, and like instructions. Analyzers are thinkers and technical and systematic. They value logic, thoroughness, and precision. Thinkers tend to focus on facts and technical details while communicating.



Directors direct. These individuals are usually results-oriented and want to see productivity. Often, directors are competitive, take charge, and can make firm decisions. Directors tend to focus on the big picture, get right to the point, and generally use as few words as possible.



Relators are typically considerate and sympathetic. They are focused on people and interpersonal relationships. Relators can be great team players since they are cooperative and easy to work with. They are great listeners and are always willing to help others, but their desire to keep everyone happy may sometimes interfere with getting the job done.



Socializers are often expressive and spirited. They value relationships, acceptance, and personal prestige. These people are animated and expressive. They'll often speak quickly, use gestures, and may get easily sidetracked onto another story altogether. Socializers are great motivators because of their enthusiasm.

Knowing your communication style as well as that of integrated care team members will position your team for success in an integrated care setting.

Communication Between Medical and Behavioral Health (BH) Providers²

Professional training, geographic location, social networks, our role in the organization, and past experiences influence communication. There are key language differences between medical and behavioral health providers and it's important to seek to understand as we move to communicate more effectively.



Medical Providers



Behavioral Health Providers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allergies • Diabetes • Asthma • Routine Check-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chest Pain • Anxiety • Depression • BH Referrals 	<p>Conditions Treated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Bipolar Disorder • Depression • Eating Disorders • Substance Use • Trauma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did the pain start? • On a scale of 1-10, how much does it hurt right now? • How often do you forget to take your medications? 		<p>Language Differences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you been feeling this week? • Why do you think that may be? • Tell me about your childhood.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More quantitative • Questions asked typically elicit shorter answers 		<p>Summary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More qualitative • Use words that demonstrate emotion • Painting a picture with words

Equity in Action^{1,3}

Effective health communication is critical to health and well-being. Healthy People 2030 focuses on improving health communication so that people can easily understand and act on health information.



Health information and messages are often overly complex, making them hard to understand and use. Health care providers who communicate clearly and use methods like teach-back and shared decision-making can help people make informed health-related decisions. These strategies can help improve outcomes, especially for certain groups — like people who have limited health literacy skills or speak English as a second language.

Concisely Presenting a Warm Hand-off to a Primary Care Provider (PCP)⁴

What to leave in		What to leave out
Ask the PCP if they are available and ready for a quick consult. The BHP adjusts to the pace of the PCP.		Prior to your consult, determine what information the PCP needs to know. Be ready to discuss if the PCP wants a deeper dive into your clinical formulation and assessment.
Presenting problem. Include relevant demographics such as age, gender, culture, and the main care concerns. PCPs only want to know information that will directly impact how they approach the patient.		Background and details of how you arrived at the diagnosis. Pertinent negatives are not usually necessary. (One important pertinent negative might be 'patient is not suicidal.')
Specific data such as a PHQ-9 score and presenting symptoms.		PCPs may not have time to hear the dynamics behind the symptoms, so start with a symptom list and allow the PCP to ask for more detail if they require it.
Relevant background information. Clinical diagnoses, current medications with prescribed doses, and associated social circumstances.		Historical narratives. Wait for a prompt from the PCP if they want more details.
Any safety concerns and if there is a plan to address these concerns.		The PCP may not want the details of the plan, but only that one is in place.
Current mental status. The PCP needs to establish rapport quickly – what mood, concerns, and orientation should the PCP be aware of?		Don't directly tell your PCP how to approach their patient. Provide them the facts they need to be able to adjust.
Communicate and understand if the PCP wants you in the exam room together, to be available after, or any other ways you can support during the visit.		Don't abandon your PCP – your role is to support the patient and the PCP.
Have a recommendation ready for the PCP's review and approval.		Ask the PCP what they would like from you to help the patient.

References

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