

LISTENING & CONNECTING EMPATHICALLY – CORE COMPETENCIES

1. **Describing / Observing The Strategy The Person Is Using:** What the person is actually saying or doing (it could be anything.) Refers to (an observable set of actions/words) designed to achieve a particular desired future (i.e., get their needs met.)
 - Competence Criteria: Should be observed and or described without making any moralistic or clinical judgments
 - Factual statement; Specific, concrete to time & context; Observable; Direct “Quote”
2. **Identifying / Describing How The Person Is Feeling:** Simple feeling or emotion which all people share. Feelings are a window into your needs. Critical: They are not static and change all the time
 - Competence Criteria: Should be based on what we see, hear and expressed simply (one word) without including a moralistic judgment
 - Respectful and logical guesses; Does not include any evaluative words, a metaphor, a simile, a story, an explanation, a particular person or situation
 - Words chosen are on the Feelings Lists
3. **Honoring The Feedback The Person Is Always Offering:** Regarding their needs at that specific moment and the purpose of the strategy. The feedback can also refer to the impact we are having on them, as well as, how helpful we actually are at that moment
 - Competence Criteria: Our actions / responses are based and directed by the person's reaction to what we do, what we see or hear and, how the person is feeling
 - Respectful and logical guess; Able to define and recognize what the person looks like when their needs are met & when their needs are not met
4. **Identifying / Describing What The Person Is Needing:** A basic requirement (fundamental to all human beings) for life and happiness, which *all* people share. The wide variety among our needs is mostly a difference in degree, rather than in type. Critical: They are not static and change all the time
 - Competence Criteria: Should be based on what we see, hear and expressed simply...
 - Respectful and logical guess; Clearly separated from the preference, request and strategy; Description does not include a person or situation;
 - Words chosen are on the Needs Lists
5. **Separating / Describing The Person's Preference(s):** The specific way in which one would like / hope to get their needs met regarding the use of any specific strategy
 - Competence Criteria: Should be based on what we see, hear and describe accurately how, who, when and what the person would like to or is hoping to see happening in order to get their needs met...
 - Respectful and logical guess; Clearly separated from the needs, request and strategy; Does not include a judgment

Separating / Describing The Person's Request(s): What the person is simply asking for and concretely wanting us to help them with at that moment. It is something we can choose to do / say or stop doing / saying

- Competence Criteria: Should be based on what we see, hear and describe accurately what one can do or stop doing to be helpful at that point in time...
 - Respectful and logical guess; Clearly separated from the needs, preference and strategy
 - Clearly connected to the specific preference; Clearly connected to whomever is present with the person at that time

PARTNERING: BEING PERSON DIRECTED – CORE COMPETENCIES

6. **Developing New Agreements:** Honoring the fact that the person has to enthusiastically embrace what we are doing since the person is actually driving the change. To come together, joining with someone, when the option or solution does not create any safety issues and responding to their request. When safety is an issue, we are partnering with someone to ensure that everyone's need for safety is met.
 - Competence Criteria: Being able to develop agreements with someone that will be enthusiastically embraced, developed in cooperation and ensure that everyone's needs are met. There are three (3) types of agreements:
 - Preference Agreements (*around everyday life and types of supports preferences*)
 - Process Agreements (*to help the person and team create a simple and predictable process*)
 - Safety Agreements (*to ensure the person and/or others' safety*)
7. **Monitoring Feedback:** Appreciating that people are constantly letting us know, when we are trying to be helpful, how they are feeling. The challenge is to be present enough in the moment to not only pick up on those subtle cues, but to see and understand them primarily as a direct response to the impact of what we just did or said may have had on them.
 - Competence Criteria: Being aware and constantly looking for feedback:
 - At all times – In the moment – Immediate – Ongoing
 - Is the person looking like their needs are met
 - Is the person enthusiastically responding or embracing what we are doing together
8. **Providing Emergency Empathy:** Being able (when someone looks like their needs are not met) to focus solely on validating the person's experience and connecting with them empathically. Continue providing emergency empathy until the person looks their needs are met.
 - Competence Criteria: Validation occurs when the person's thoughts, feelings, needs and behaviors are accepted, believed and completely understandable given the circumstances. In the moment, the focus should be on:
 - Suspending the moralistic judgments we have been making
 - Following the flow of the story and the person's experiences rather than trying to lead or influence in any way
 - Connecting with the person's experiences, their feelings and their needs at that moment
 - Accepting the person at face value and search for justification of the person experiences:
 - *Appreciating the person's good reasons for feeling and thinking the way they do and*
 - *Recognizing that the person is truly doing the best they can with what they know and have at that point in time*
 - Validating the person's experiences with us at that moment
9. **Using Judgment & Testing Agreement:** Being aware of potential risks when exploring possible solutions or agreements with someone and testing our decisions, possible solutions and agreements for safety.
 - Competence Criteria: Safety always comes first: We can only be (responsibly) person directed when our need for safety (ours and others) is met.
 - Always being aware of risks, health or safety in the moment
 - Always supporting the person not to harm themselves or others
10. **Making Effective & “DO-ABLE” Requests:** Can be used to work with permission, to gather more information about the person's perspective, the most immediate problem and what might be a helpful solution, to introduce new ideas or feedback.
 - Competence Criteria: Phrasing requests in simple, concrete (avoid vague, abstract or ambiguous language), positive action language where you focus on what you would like the person to be doing, rather than on what you want the person to stop doing.
 - In a true request, the choice is actually with the person receiving the request. So the person is free to, and wants to act or respond the way they do. There are two ways to determine if your request was really a request:
 - How the person responds to our request
 - How we respond when the person refuses to act on our request

LEARNING & SEEKING FEEDBACK – CORE COMPETENCIES

11. **Seeking & Honoring Feedback:** Feedback is a *gift* because it is an opportunity for you to learn something important about yourself, about helping others, about a specific person's perspective on your efforts to help and more importantly, it is an opportunity to make simple changes to improve the person's experience when you are partnering with or helping them. The following are key practices to adopt in order to create a culture of feedback:

- Competence Criteria: Listening To Feedback (Without Debating)
 - Asking for feedback only when wanting an honest response
 - Avoiding becoming defensive
 - Considering any feedback as being in best interest
 - Understanding that debating the feedback offered is the surest way to eliminate honest feedback
 - Separate your preference i.e., how the feedback is presented or given to you from the feedback itself
- Competence Criteria: Checking & Verifying (Formally)
 - Regularly and systematically asking for feedback:
 - How you are doing as a helper (Process)
 - Validation: Being heard, seen & known
 - What we do: Focus, goal & topics
 - How we do what we do: Supportive & encouraging role
 - If what you are doing together is working (Progress)
 - Experience and satisfaction with the help or supports we are offering

12. **Reflecting & Debriefing:** Something we do with someone regularly, particularly when anger or frustrations are present, when there is conflict, when there is a crisis or a remarkable event.

- Competence Criteria: Being able to explore without the person's perspective on an event or moment where what we did or said was not received as well as we were hoping. The following are useful questions:
 - What are we learning?
 - What could improve the experience?
 - What can we do differently in the future?
 - Do we need new agreements?
- Competence Criteria: Celebrating and expressing gratitude for the feedback, the help and the participation of the person you are trying to help every chance you get.