

SET Communication Skill

Support

Support refers to an initial statement that indicates that you support the person. It is a statement that begins with "I" and demonstrates concern and a desire to help. It can be anything that establishes a foundation for the relationship or interaction: "I want to try to help you feel better" "I care about you" "I am worried about how you are feeling" "I am concerned and want to help" "I want to try to help you with this situation"

The supporting statement is meant to reassure the other person that the relationship is a safe one and that their needs matter even during this difficult moment.

Empathy

Empathy refers to communicating that you understand what the other individual is feeling and focuses on "you." It is not a conveyance of pity or sympathy, but instead a true awareness and validation of the feelings of the other person, such as, "I see you are angry, and I understand how you can get mad at me" "This must be a difficult time for you" "You must be feeling really stressed/distressed/concerned" "No one can imagine how painful this must be for you" or "How frustrating this must be for you"

It is important not to tell people how they are feeling, but instead, put their demonstrated feelings into words. The goal is to convey a clear understanding of the uncomfortable feelings they might be having and that they are OK to have, reassuring the person. Without a statement of empathy, they may feel that their feelings are not understood. It is important to use feeling words, as in the examples above.

Truth

Truth refers to a realistic and honest assessment of the situation and the other person's role in solving the problem. It is an objective statement that focuses on the "it," not on the subjective experience of either you or her. They may seem to be asking or

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demanding something impossible, not taking an active role or responsibility in resolving an issue or even presenting you with a "no-win" situation.

The truth statement is meant to clearly and honestly respond to any demands or behavior while placing responsibility where it belongs. Examples include, "This is what I can do..." "Here are some ways I can help..." "What are you thinking about doing? What have you thought about doing?" "We need to/let's figure out what to do about this"

It is important to use the support and empathy statements first so that the person is better able to *hear* what you are saying, otherwise, the truth statement may be experienced as a rejection or criticism, creating defensiveness or anger.

Validation and Support Are Not Agreement

When first learning about SET, it can seem that you are being asked to agree with the person. It is important to clarify that validating feelings does not mean that you agree with them, only that you recognize that he or she is feeling them.

The supportive communication method does not mean that you are letting the person off the hook; instead, you are focusing on honest communication and ensuring that you are being heard, not just reacting to and defending against what is being said.