

# SESSION 2

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### **Breastfeeding Promotion and Support**

A Training Course for Health Professionals

*Adapted from the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative:  
Revised, Updated and Expanded for Integrated Care (Section 3)  
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# Session Objectives:

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify communication skills of
  - listening and learning
  - building confidence
2. Practice the use of these skills with a worksheet

# COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Health workers are trained to look for and fix problems **BUT**
- Good communication means respect for the women's own thoughts, beliefs and culture
- **NOT** tell or advise a person what **YOU** think they should do

# COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Health workers should be able to do more than just offer info
  - Help mothers to look at cause of any difficulties
  - Suggest courses of action to help fix problem
  - Sometimes just offer assurance she is doing well

# **1. Identify Communication Skills of Listening, Learning and Building Confidence**

# Skills to Listen and Learn

- Helpful non verbal communication
- Ask open questions
- Encourage the mother to talk
- Emphasise
- Avoid words which sound judging

# Skills to Listen and Learn

## Helpful non verbal communication:

- Sit at same level and close to mother
- Remove any physical barriers- desk/folders
- Pay attention to mother -Avoid getting distracted
- Show you are listening – nod/smile/gestures
- Take time without hurrying – don't look at your watch
- Only touch in appropriate way (hand/arm)
- Don't touch her breasts/baby without permission

# Skills to Listen and Learn

## Ask open questions

- You need to assess the situation/difficulty
- Ask questions that encourages the mother to talk
- Open questions start with ***“How? What? Where? Why?”***
- Close questions do not give much info
  - Start with ***“Are you? Did you? Has the baby?”***
  - Sometimes suggest the “correct” answer

# Skills to Listen and Learn

## Encourage mother to talk

- Show we are interested in what mother is saying
- Use responses such as
  - Nodding/smiling
  - Phrases such as “Uh Hmm”, “Go on...”
- Reflect back what the mother is saying
  - Can help clarify the mother’s statement
- Mix reflecting back with other responses

# Skills to Listen and Learn

## Emphatise

- to show you are hearing and trying to understand her feelings
- Looking at it from **HER** point of view
- Emphatise with her good feelings too, not just bad feelings
- Find out how she feels about the situation
- Then ask for more facts

# Skills to Listen and Learn

## Avoid judging words

- Judging words include: *right, wrong, well, bad, good, problem*
- Can make a woman feel
  - like she has a standard to reach
  - Baby not behaving normally

# Skills to Build Confidence and Give Support

- Good communication skills help mother to feel good and confident to carry out her decisions
- To help her build confidence:
  - Accept what a mother thinks and feels
  - Recognise and acknowledge what is right
  - Give practical help
  - Provide relevant information using suitable language
  - Make one or two suggestions.

# Skills to Build Confidence and Give Support

## Accept what a mother thinks and feels

- Acceptance without disagreeing
- Does not mean we agree she is right
- Accept what she is saying, give correct info later
- Helps mother to trust you and encourages her to continue the conversation

# Skills to Build Confidence and Give Support

## Recognise and acknowledge what is right

- Recognise and praise what mother and baby are achieving
  - Tell mother how well baby is attaching
  - Point out how clever the baby is in detaching himself after feed

# Skills to Build Confidence and Give Support

## Give practical help

- Milk will flow better if mother is comfortable
  - Offer another pillow
  - Offer to hold baby while she goes to wash
- May need clear practical help e.g how to express milk

# Skills to Build Confidence and Give Support

## **Provide relevant information using suitable language**

- Find out what she needs to know at this time
- Use suitable words that mother understands
- Do not overwhelm her with information

## **Make suggestions, not COMMANDS**

- Provide choices and let her decide
- Do not tell her what she should do
- Limit suggestions to 1 or 2

# Arrange follow-up and on-going support

- After a discussion, mother may
  - **still have questions but not time to discuss**
  - **think of something else**
  - **find it difficult to put practice into action**



# Arrange follow-up and on-going support

- Important to arrange follow-up and on-going support
  - \_ **Learn what is available from family and friends**
  - \_ **Offer a time to see or talk to her again**
  - \_ **Encourage her to see you or another person for help**
  - \_ **Refer to community support group if possible**
  - \_ **Refer her for more specialised counselling if needed**

## **2. Practice Communication Skills**

# SUMMARY

- Communication involves listening and building confidence, and not just giving information
- Listening and learning
  - **Use helpful non verbal communication**
  - **Show interest, reflect back and emphasise**
  - **Avoid judging words**
- Building confidence and giving support
  - **Accept what a mother thinks and feels**
  - **Recognise and acknowledge what is right**
  - **Give practical help and relevant information**
- Arrange suitable follow-up and support

# THANK YOU