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Clear Communication and Tough Conversations: Skills for Effective Management

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Objectives

- ▶ Participants will be able to identify when "tough conversations" are needed, and how to set the stage for effective dialogue that can improve the health and functioning of both individuals and organizations.
- ▶ Participants will learn specific skills for staying focused, expressing ideas persuasively, and communicating for positive results even when stressed or upset.
- ▶ Participants will learn skills for handling negative or difficult behavior on the part of staff members, such as failure to follow through on responsibilities or broken promises.

Crucial Conversations & Crucial Confrontations

- ▶ Books by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler
- ▶ Researched effective communication over a period of 25 years
- ▶ Asked more than 20,000 people to “identify individuals in their organizations who could really get things done”
- ▶ The most important skill of high performers: the ability to have open, honest conversations

The need for shared meaning

- ▶ How a tonsillectomy became a foot amputation
- ▶ The value of the free flow of ideas
- ▶ The restrictions imposed by fear and conflict
- ▶ Your importance as a manager

Communication issues specific to sexual assault programs

- ▶ The relationship of communication patterns to the anti-oppression model
- ▶ Communication issues specific to crisis services and serving clients
- ▶ Tension between a nonhierarchical model and the need to make decisions quickly and effectively
- ▶ Multigenerational, multicultural issues

Skills for effective communication

- ▶ 1. Stay focused – know what you want, and stick with that vision
 - ▶ 2. Maintain healthy dialogue, no matter how difficult the conversation becomes
 - ▶ USE THESE QUESTIONS AS A GUIDE:
 - What do I really want for myself?
 - What do I really want for others?
 - What do I really want for the relationship?
 - How would I behave if I really wanted these results?
- from *Crucial Conversations*

Should you tackle a problem?

- ▶ Have you defined the problem clearly?
- ▶ Is it worth dealing with?
- ▶ What will be the consequences if you don't deal with it – to yourself, to other, or to your organization?
- ▶ What are your reasons for wanting to avoid the problem?

Why we lose focus

- ▶ We want to win
- ▶ We want to get back at others
- ▶ We want to stay safe

Use “and” thinking, not “either/or” thinking

- ▶ We often think our choices are either to avoid the situation or to go ballistic
- ▶ The challenge is to figure out how to address the problem AND keep the relationship healthy

Don't start with a negative narrative

- ▶ Fundamental attribution error
- ▶ The need to examine our own narratives and generate alternative versions
- ▶ The importance of giving others the benefit of the doubt

Three critical skills

- ▶ 1. Notice when the conversation changes from harmless to crucial
- ▶ 2. Look for signs that others don't feel safe
- ▶ 3. Be aware of your own Stress Style
 - Free online Stress Style assessment at www.vitalsmarts.com/bookresources
 - (click on “Crucial Conversations”)

--From *Crucial Conversations*

Strategies to encourage communication

- ▶ Maintain a “win–win” philosophy
- ▶ Find common ground
- ▶ Proceed with respect

Communication pitfalls

- ▶ Disregard for timing
- ▶ Stating the problem in a negative fashion
- ▶ Throwing in everything but the kitchen sink
- ▶ Forgetting to listen
- ▶ Using “emotion mind”
- ▶ Having preconceived notions of the solution
- ▶ Failing to establish clear, behavioral agreements

“Describe the gap”

- ▶ Clearly express what you expected
- ▶ Provide data about what has happened
- ▶ End with a question

--From *Crucial Confrontations*

How do you increase motivation?

- ▶ Figure out what is important to the individual
- ▶ Connect the desired behavior to the person's values
- ▶ Be clear about the consequences of behavior, without using threats or force
- ▶ Don't push too hard
- ▶ Be clear about your role and responsibilities

When people are difficult

- ▶ Be sure that the issue is motivation, not ability or tools
- ▶ If the behavior doesn't change and you choose to deal with it, be honest about what you are doing

Reduce barriers

- ▶ Use good communication skills to explore barriers to compliance
- ▶ Help to break tasks down into manageable pieces
- ▶ Be sure that people have the tools and support they need to do a good job

What to do when others become upset

- ▶ Stay focused and as calm as you can
- ▶ Empathize, but don't get distracted
- ▶ Give the person time to calm down
- ▶ Talking about the facts will help the other person to calm down and use his or her sense of reason

Be clear and specific about follow-up

- ▶ Be sure that solutions are clear to all parties and that you know who will do what when
- ▶ If another issue is raised, be intentional about whether to pursue it or stick with your original concern

Catch them being good

- ▶ Problems must be addressed, but positive actions must be acknowledged as well
- ▶ If it is specific and sincere, there is no such thing as too much praise
- ▶ Train yourself to focus on the positive
- ▶ Praise individuals in private, groups in public

Thanks for your participation

You can contact me at

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Wrap Up

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