

Tips for Effective Interactions

Treat Everyone with Dignity, Respect, and a Mix of Professionalism and Warmth

Remind individuals that you are there to help and to be their advocate.

Give all feedback privately, at all times respecting and remembering people's dignity and need for privacy. People are much more likely to hear feedback as criticism if not delivered carefully. Confidentiality is more than a legal issue; it is a true sign of respect.

Ask permission to ask a question or to disagree. Always say, "Is it okay if I ask you a question or disagree on this?" If he or she says yes, go ahead. If not, either don't have the conversation or find out in a subtle way why the individual has that response.

Smile and remember to maintain a little humor. It can send the message that you are comfortable with the individual as a person and is a sign of respect and genuine caring.

Set the Occasion for Effective Interactions

Always tell individuals what you are going to do before you do it and what you expect before the situation occurs. These presets help reduce confusion and can prevent upset.

Establish meaningful boundaries and stick to them.

Keep a record of what happens between you and the person, particularly if it is part of a system that an individual maintains such as a logbook; this helps support follow-up and benefits both you and them.

Stay Calm

Staff members who are the most effective in their work with people are those who are able to stay calm in the midst of crisis situation.

When an individual is confused, anxious, frustrated, or even depressed, the last thing needed is a staff member who exacerbates the situation by failing to remain calm.

In a stressful situation, the first thing to do is nothing. People who react quickly are likely emotional.

Be Willing to Evaluate Your Own Interaction Skills

Always try to listen to what you are saying and how you say it. You are there to educate and support individuals, not to talk down to or parent them.

Whenever a situation starts to get out of hand, look first at what you've done and what you are doing- don't look first to what the person is doing. Your non-verbal communication has tremendous impact on individuals and fellow staff. People notice when you slam doors and grumble under your breath.

Don't Take Things Personally

It is human nature to feel personally responsible when things don't do well.

Remember, the individuals we work with may not have good control over their behavior.

Don't expect Individuals to change immediately. Interventions may take time to work and, at first, progress may only be seen in small increments. Mark Twain said, "Quitting cigarette smoking is the easiest thing I have ever done. know because I have done it 1,000 times."