

Building a Positive Work Environment



The ACT PRIME Study

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ACT Consortium, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK.



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INTRODUCTION TO THE MANUAL

Before we start...

Welcome to the Learners Manual for the module entitled – Building a Positive Work Environment.

We are very glad to have you as one of the first set of health workers to participate in this important training.

Everything you will need during the course and as a reference is included in this manual. In addition, there are notes and explanations included in the manual for you to refer back to at a later point.

The trainer will guide you on when to use the manual. Please focus on the trainer when she is talking and focus on the manual exercises when the trainer has guided you to a specific page, which needs your attention. The additional resources in the manuals are for your future reference.

Thank you for participating fully in this training and for respecting your fellow colleagues. Each one of you is unique and each one of you learns at a different pace. The trainer will take great care to cater to all your needs in order to make the training a success. Thank you in advance for doing your part to make it a valuable learning experience.

How to use this manual...

Throughout this manual, you will come across certain re-occurring symbols and boxes. These highlight certain key aspects for learning or contain information, which will help you during or after the training. The following is an explanation of these symbols.

Icons & symbols

Purpose:

Learning Outcomes:

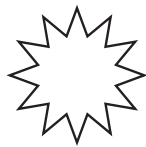
PURPOSE & LEARNING OUTCOMES

This coloured box can be found at the start of each main topic section. In this box you will find the **PURPOSE** of the Topic and the key **LEARNING OUTCOMES** for that Topic.



KEY QUESTION

This symbol can be found when a **KEY QUESTION** is being asked.



DEFINITION or KEY LEARNING POINT

This symbol represents a **DEFINITION** or a **KEY LEARNING POINT** to be remembered.



GROUP WORK

This symbol represents **GROUP WORK**. The training is interactive and a significant amount of your time will be spent in **GROUP WORK**. This symbol indicates that the activity will be done in a group. This means that you need to be a team player and allow all members of your group to participate equally.



WORK IN PAIRS

This symbol represents **WORK IN PAIRS**. This will be an opportunity for you to work one to one with a colleague. Pair work could mean buzzing or role playing, interviewing or problem solving. Be sure that each person in the pair gets a chance.



SUMMARY

This symbol will be shown where you can find a **SUMMARY** box – you can review these summary points at home or before the next training and in the future.



SELF-OBSERVATION ACTIVITY

This mascot symbol will be shown where there is a **SELF-OBSERVATION ACTIVITY** and some guidelines for you to follow.

Your Notes:

NOTES

This represents a space for your **NOTES**. Feel free to write your comments and questions and anything that you do not understand in these spaces and discuss it with your trainer before, during or after a training.

What are you going to learn...

This module addresses the challenge of 'building a positive work environment.' The purpose behind this module comes from formative research that found that health workers, like yourself, felt unhappy in their work environment, leading to low motivation to work to the best of their ability, as well as absenteeism. Health workers face many challenges in their work. You often work at the health centre alone, without the drugs and other supplies that you need, insufficient equipment, and without the financial and political support of those above you in the health system. These challenges, along with other constraints, can cause stress for you as health workers, they can have a negative effect on health worker ability to deliver the standard of care you would like to deliver to patients, and can negatively affect relationships with communities and with other aspects of the health system. In this situation, some health workers may feel the need to seek alternative ways to make money, and to gain respect from others. This can lead to expectations of payments from patients for services or supplies, working shorter days at the health centre, and attempting to demonstrate power in relationships with others.

During this module those health workers in the group who are in-charges will have the opportunity to present changes that they are planning at their health centres and then to give the group of health workers who are not in-charges the opportunity to discuss some of the remaining challenges they face themselves at their health centres. Practical discussions about coping with stress will take place using your SOA from PCS02. This should help you to identify and practice skills to deal with stress daily. Throughout this module, it is important that as participants you have space to discuss with colleagues and to help each other to identify what you can and can't change, and make plans together to change the things you can.

In this module, there are two topics.

1. Health centre management changes
2. Dealing with stress at work

In the first topic, in-charges among you will present their learning from the HCM modules to the other participants and have a discussion on the implications for the health centre and staff. In the second topic, you, as participants will be giving feedback from you SOA exercise on stress, and building on this to develop strategies for dealing with stress at work.

The **key learning outcomes** for PCS 03 are:

Topic	Learning Outcomes By the end of this module, you will be able to...
Health Care Management Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognise their challenges at work.• Know about planned Health Centre Management changes.• Know their role in Health Centre Management changes.
Dealing with stress at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognise stress by how we feel and behave.• Understand the effect of automatic reactions on us and others.• Know how to 'step back' and stop automatic reactions.• Carry a picture of best practice in dealing with difficult.

TRAINING AGENDA

This module will last 3 hours from start to finish.

Today's training will start at ____:____ Today's training will end by ____:____

Topics	Total time
Introduction to the module - Greetings & Review - Training rationale and Learning outcomes	15 minutes
TOPIC 1: Health Centre Management Changes - Introduction to the topic - Thinking about the topic - Principles and Practice - Discussion and Planning	60 minutes
Break	30 minutes
TOPIC 2: Dealing with stress at work - Introduction to the topic - Thinking about the topic - Principles - Practice - Discussion - Planning	80 minutes
Health worker Self-Observation Activity #3 - Introduction - Instructions for Self-Observation # 3	20 minutes
Conclusion	5 minutes
TOTAL	180 minutes = 3 hours

INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE

Purpose: To welcome and orient you to the training and help you to understand what you can expect of the training and what will be expected of you as participants.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this session, you will:

- 1) Know the names of co-participants.
- 2) Know the name of the training leader.
- 3) Review and accept a set of ground rules for the training.
- 4) Review the previous module's key learning points.
- 5) Know the learning outcomes and purpose of the module.

1. Greetings & Review

Name of Trainer:

Names of co-participants: *complete if you wish*

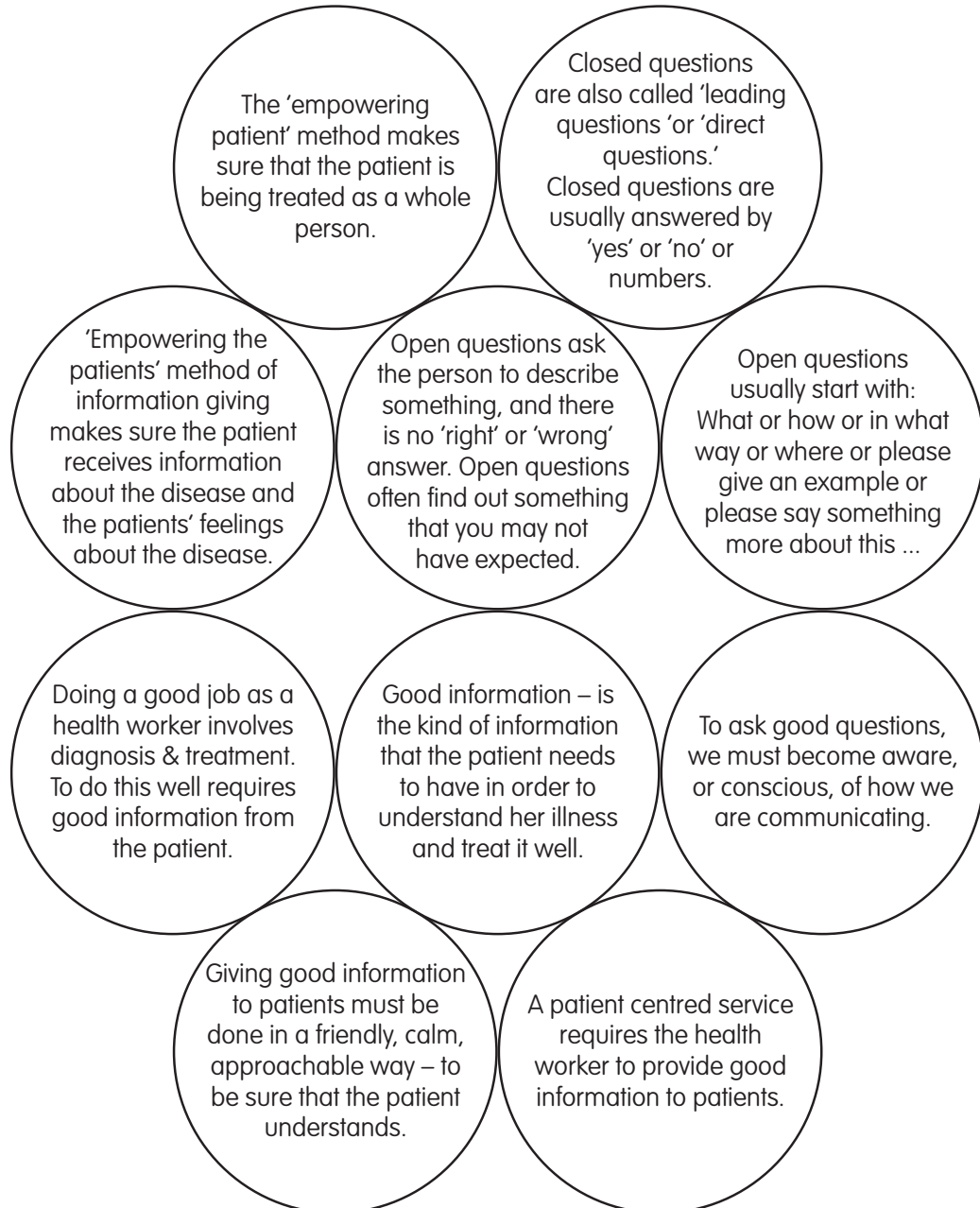
Ground Rules: *that will support the learning of all participants*

Please write the ground rules agreed on by the group below:

Review Circles

Guide: This is an opportunity to review the learning outcomes from the previous module.

Some participants will read out a summary point in one of the circles. You can use whatever kind of voice you wish – for example a loud voice, a singing voice. Be sure to speak clearly. Introduce the person sitting next to you before reading out a summary circle.



TOPIC 1: HEALTH CENTRE MANAGEMENT CHANGES

Purpose: To orient participants to the changes in health care management.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this session, you will:

- 1) Recognise your challenges at work
- 2) Know about planned Health Centre Management changes
- 3) Know your role in the Health Centre Management changes

1. Introduction to the topic

- So far in this PCS training you have focused on building good relationships with patients. You have seen that patients respond best when they are listened to and when the health centre is a friendly environment for them. You have also seen that developing these habits is also good for you, because patients are more open to you when you treat them well. They make your job simpler and more rewarding.
- However, you also know that your work is hard as a health worker. Just like patients have their needs, health workers also need to be listened to, and to have a good working environment.
- In this module everyone will discuss together what needs to be done at work in order to create a supportive working environment.

2. Thinking about the topic

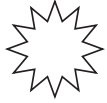
ACTIVITY A – Self-Observation Activity Discussion

Guide: In your groups at your tables, tell each other about what happened when you did your self-observation activities this week – focusing on the challenges and the consequences of these challenges.

Challenges I face at work	Consequences of these challenges

Topic 1: Health Centre Management Changes

- A health worker can have unique experiences and challenges that only she or he faces and there are some that all health workers share and have in common.
- These challenges shape whether you are able to achieve the objectives you set yourselves at work, and affect how you feel towards your work and towards yourselves as health workers.
- Some challenges can be tackled by you as individuals or together in groups, others of these difficulties are too big for you to deal with by yourselves.



Learning Point

The Serenity Prayer is a prayer that is used across the world in different situations. It is useful as a reminder that although you can change some things, you cannot change everything. It is important to remember this today as you think about the challenges you face at work.

**‘God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.’**

3. Principles and practice

Guide: In-charges who attended the HCM training will summarise the main learning points covered in the three HCM modules.

- HCM 01 PHC Fund Management
- HCM 02 Drug Supply Management
- HCM 03 Health Information Management

HCM 01 PHC Fund Management

Your Notes

4. Discussion and planning



Which challenges can be addressed by the changes proposed by the in-charges from your health centre?

Guide: Take some time to write down the challenges that apply to your work, listed on the 'CHALLENGES I FACE IN MY WORK' flip chart notes on page 11 and the table you completed with your group on page 13. Tick the ones that you feel can be addressed by the changes proposed by the in-charges during their presentation.

CHALLENGES I FACE AT WORK	Can it be addressed by changes proposed by in-charges? Use a ✓	Can it be addressed by stepping back and using managing stress skills? Use a ✓



Learning Point

Several of the big challenges may be addressed with the changes that the in-charges plan to implement. There are still several challenges that remain. Some of these relate to your interactions with other people and how this makes you feel and react.



Summary Box – Health Centre Management Changes

For reference for learners

- Health workers face different experiences and challenges at work. These challenges shape whether you are able to achieve the objectives you set yourselves at work, and affect how you feel towards your work and towards yourselves as health workers.
- Some challenges can be tackled by individuals or together in groups, others of these difficulties are too big for health workers to deal with alone.
- Several of the big challenges may be addressed with the changes that the in-charges plan to implement especially relating to:
 - Drug Supply Management
 - PHC Fund Management
 - Health Information Management
- All health workers can work together towards making changes at the health centre.

TOPIC 2: DEALING WITH STRESS AT WORK

Purpose: To support you in your efforts to find ways to respond to work stress.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this session, you will:

- 1) Recognise stress by how we feel and behave
- 2) Understand the effect of automatic reactions on us and others
- 3) Know how to 'step back' and stop automatic reactions
- 4) Carry a picture of best practice in dealing with difficult patients and situations

1. Introduction to the topic

- Some of the challenges one faces at work are related to relationships with others. You also reflected on this in your self-observation activities over the past few weeks when you looked at stress at work.
- While some changes require other people to help to make it happen, with stress, you can develop some skills to deal with it yourselves. It is not easy to get these skills, but once you get into the habit of using them, you will find dealing with stress at work, and at home, much easier.

2. Thinking about the topic

- In PCS 02, you were given the self-observation activity to look at stress.
- In the first step, you were asked to make notes about what stress is, and to observe how it feels.



What is stress?

Your Notes



How do you know when you are stressed? What 'symptoms' do you see?

Your Notes



Learning Point

Everyone experiences stress differently and so there may be different ideas about what it is and how you will know you are experiencing it.

You may not even have known that you were experiencing stress before.

Becoming self-aware through self-observation activity can support you as health workers to develop the skills to cope with stress effectively.



Can you recall an incident when you felt stressed and made notes as part of your SOA?

Your Notes

Guide: In your groups at your tables, tell each other about what happened when you did your self-observation activities this week.



What do you think made you feel stressed?

Your Notes



What did you do differently because you were stressed?

Your Notes



How did this stress affect how you went about your day?

Your Notes

3. Principles

Stress affects everyone and it can make you behave in a way you do not like, and can make you feel negative.

- You can even start to feel like you are 'burnt out'.
- The term 'burn out' is used to describe the situation when you feel so unhappy about work that you do not want to go in to work, and feel totally demotivated.
- Stress and burn out happen a lot to health workers around the world, including here in Uganda. This is probably because of the context of work as a health worker.
- You may have experienced burn out yourself but not realised that was what it was.

Think about why you become stressed, and why this can sometimes lead to burn out.

- Stress has many different sources, often relating to our environment.
- At the health centre, some sources of stress for health workers are:
 - Stock outs of supplies
 - Financial concerns
 - Lack of information to manage work load
- Stress can also come from your interactions with other people. Sometimes, you may feel that patients or colleagues are 'difficult' and you can become stressed. For example:
 - 'She stresses me, she always does X when I come in'
 - 'Those patients always stress me, I think they do Y just to annoy me'
 - 'If only Person Z would stop reacting like that, I would not get stressed'



When you are stressed with the way someone else is behaving, like in these examples, who do you usually blame?

Your Notes



Who do you think should take responsibility for your stress?

Your Notes

Topic 2: Dealing with stress at work

- You might react to stress by blaming others. But, if you expect others to take responsibility for your stress, it is likely that you will carry the stress with you and it will not be reduced.
- The bad news is – you are the only one who can take action to change your behaviour and reduce your stress. You can't change others.
- The good news is – if you change your behaviour, the other person will change, too.

**So, what can you do about stress?***Your Notes*

**Learning Point**

- If you respond well to stress, you often 'step back' before you respond.
- If you respond less well, you often have automatic reactions that are negative.
 - You can become angry and irritated with others.
 - For example, you may tell the patient to 'stop fussing!' or 'Just do as I say!' or, 'Listen, instead of complaining!'
- These reactions can make the situation worse, making the other person stressed too, and keeping you stressed.
- When you 'step back,' you can stop yourself from making this automatic reaction. So, instead of saying what you feel like straight away, you:
 - Stop yourself
 - Stand back from the situation
 - Get control of your feelings
- Then, you can choose how to respond. You might realise that your automatic reaction has prevented you from really seeing the situation, so your response is to really listen to the other person.
 - Often, when patients are being 'difficult' it is simply because they are upset and feel like they are not being heard or understood.
 - You might decide to ask a simple question, like 'please tell me more?'

4. Practice



ACTIVITY A – Part 1: Role play of automatic reactions

Guide:

- This activity will illustrate automatic reactions.
 - **Part 1:** Role play of automatic reactions
 - **Part 2:** Role play of stepping back
- Divide the participants at your table into two groups – one group will play the health workers in the first role play and the other group will play the patients.
- The groups will switch roles for the second role play.

Scenarios:

Health worker: You have had a drug stock out. You collected drugs from the district yesterday and so were not at the health centre. But, the drugs you collected did not include all those drugs that you needed. You feel frustrated with this situation, and stressed by the number of patients who are waiting to be seen. They do not seem to understand that you are trying to help them by collecting the drugs – they are just judging you for being absent yesterday.

When you see this patient, you can see that she has a Urinary Tract Infection. You do not have the necessary drugs, and you send her to the pharmacy to buy ciprofloxacin.

Patient: You are feeling upset and frustrated with this health worker. You came yesterday and waited but the health worker didn't come to the health centre. Now, you have waited for 2 hours and you have seen other patients move ahead of you in the line. You have heard on the radio that the health workers are taking drugs that should be given for free and they are asking patients to go and buy the drugs from their pharmacy.

When the health worker is telling you that you have to go to the pharmacy, you don't believe her. You think she has the drugs there and should give them to you for free. Argue with the health worker that you want the drugs here at the health centre for free.

Feedback



What was the impact of the health worker's automatic reaction on the patient, and on the outcome of the consultation?

Your Notes



As the health worker: what can you do to avoid this bad outcome of the consultation?

Your Notes



How will you go about 'stepping back' and stopping your automatic response, to really listen to what is upsetting the patient and responding to those concerns?

Your Notes



As the patient: how will you feel, and how will you respond, if the health worker asks about what is really upsetting you?

Your Notes



ACTIVITY A – Part 2: Role play of stepping back

Guide: This role play will illustrate stepping back from stressful situation – choose one person in your group to be a health worker, the other a patient.

Look at the scenario from Part 1 of the role play on page 21.

Topic 2: Dealing with stress at work



How did the health worker 'step back'? What was the impact of the health worker stepping back on the patient's response, and on the outcome of the consultation?

Your Notes

5. Discussion



What will be the most important things for you to remember when facing 'difficult patients' or difficult situations?

Your Notes



Can it be addressed by stepping back and using your managing stress skills?

Your Notes

Guide: Please turn back to page 16 of the manual and complete column 2 with a tick alongside those challenges that you think can be addressed by stepping back and using your 'managing stress' skills.

6. Planning

Guide: In your groups at your tables, discuss the following questions.



How can you support each other to carry out these plans?

Your Notes

Topic 2: Dealing with stress at work



How can you make sure that you continue to use these strategies to address the physical and emotional challenges that you face at work?

Your Notes



Learning Point

There are still challenges that remain on our flip charts. For some of these, you may still be able to think of ways to address them yourself, or with your colleagues.

Perhaps you can start to address some of these if you continue to meet with each other in the future. But, some will be too hard to change.

Remember the Serenity Prayer:

**'God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.'**



Summary Box – Dealing with stress at work

For reference for learners

- Stress and burn out happen a lot to health workers around the world, including here in Uganda, because of the context of work as a health worker.
- When patients are being 'difficult' it may be because they are upset and feel like they are not being heard or understood.
- When we are stressed, we often have automatic reactions that lead to a bad outcome for us and our patients.
- If we are able to 'step back' and assess the situation before we respond, this can help to stop automatic responses.
- It is important to build self-awareness if we want to learn to 'step back'. We can do this through self-observation and support from our colleagues.

HEALTH WORKER SELF-OBSERVATION ACTIVITY #3: HOW DO YOU INVITE THE PATIENT TO COOPERATE?

Purpose: Review Health Worker Self–Observation Activity #3.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, you will:

- 1) Understand the Self-Observation Activity.

1. Introduction

All health workers probably sometimes experience patients as ‘difficult’ and at other times as very cooperative. This is normal – and it often has to do with how you feel and how well you cope with these feelings. Learning to recognize these feelings and take ‘a step back’ before you act, will help you maintain good relations with patients and colleagues, even if at first they seem ‘difficult’.

Health workers try to see each patient as a person. But, when you are feeling tired and overworked you may ‘stop seeing’ your patients as ‘Mrs Katanga’ or ‘Mr Kahane’, and just see them as ‘patients’, and often as ‘difficult patients’. This is when you need to take ‘a step back’ and get your feelings in perspective, rather than act out automatically or spontaneously on your (bad) feelings.

Over the last three weeks, you have looked at how you listen, how you ask good questions, and how stress affects your communication with colleagues and patients. Maybe you have changed some of your methods to improve your communication. Many people say that the ‘instant feedback’ you get when you start listening with more attention, is so rewarding that they continue with the new habits. When they are being appreciated for their communication behaviour, it feels good. It then becomes easier to treat the patient well.



2. Cooperating with the patient

This week you will focus on putting together the communication skills you have learned over the last few weeks and practice them all with the patient. The goal is that that the patient will cooperate well with you and that you establish a good relationship which makes the patient satisfied, well informed about his disease and its treatment, and motivated to follow your advice.

3. Instructions

This week you will focus on putting together the communication skills you have learned over the last few weeks and practice them all with the patient. The goal is that that the patient will cooperate well with you and that you establish a good relationship which makes the patient satisfied, well informed about his disease and its treatment, and motivated to follow your advice.

There are 2 Steps for this self-observation activity which you can complete over this week as follows:

Step 1 – Using your communication skills 2-3 days

Step 2 – Keeping your communication skills 2-3 days

The framed pages that follow are your self-observation guide. Remember to take them out of your folder as you go about your self-observation.



Instructions for SOA #1

Step 1: Using your communication skills

For the first 2-3 days, pay attention to **how you use the communication skills** you have learned during your PCS training and self-observation activities.

Each time a patient comes to the health centre, pay attention to how you:

- Greet the patient, and make him/her feel comfortable
- Help the patient to find their way around the health centre: where to go and what to do
- Listen to him/her to find out the patient's thoughts and ideas about the disease
- Ask questions
- Give information, advice, and say what action patient should take
- Check to find out if/how the patient has understood your advice, and if he/she has any questions
- Any other action you take

Make your notes in your notebook about what you do that seems to have a **positive effect** on your communication with the patient and on how the patient cooperates with you.

Make your notes in your notebook about what you do that seems to have a **negative effect**.

Ask yourself what could be the cause of your problems:

- Could it be related to your mood (is your mood 'pushing down your antennae')?
- Or to the mood of the patient, and how you react to this (e.g. is the patient scared? Shy? Angry?)
- Did you use non-verbal communication in a way the patient reacted to?
- Or is it about what you say, i.e. clarity of the communication? Did you use medical terms and jargon?
- Or did you use of a language the person does not understand well?
- Are you guessing what the problem is, or did you manage to get at their 'real' concerns?
- Or – anything else?

After 2-3 days, move on to Step 3.



Step 2: Keeping your communication skills

For the rest of the week, look at your overall communication style and interaction with patients.

Try to focus on the following three questions:

Question 1: Do you see a pattern in how you invite the patient to cooperate? What is the pattern? When do you need to take 'a step back'?

Make notes in your notebook of the actions you take to successfully invite the patient to cooperate.

Question 2: Do you have 'a picture in your head' of how you want your patients to see you? How do you behave to achieve this 'picture in your head'?

Make notes in your notebook of the successes and 'failures' of behaving in this way.

Question 3: How can you work with others to improve the patients' visits to the health centre?

Make notes about how you can work with other health centre staff and volunteers to make the patient feel more comfortable and willing to cooperate.

Make notes in your notebooks to discuss with your colleagues at the next PCS training module.

Please bring examples both of what you do, that works well, and examples of problems you have in using your communication skills. In each case, reflect on WHY your approach works (i.e. what exactly is it you do, or don't do), or does not work. When sharing such strategies and challenges, you can learn from each other.

CONCLUSION

Purpose: To close the PCS 03 training and receive any questions or address any questions in the parking lot.



Any comments or questions you may have about what was covered today?

Your Notes

Answers to parking lot questions

Thank you for participating today!

Sharing your experience and insight has been very helpful and informative.

Please use the Learner's Manual regularly to review what you have learned.

Discuss any challenges with your colleagues; they will be most helpful for finding solutions to problems and challenges at your health centre.

Goodbye.



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