

Summary Sheet

Your family as a team

ATSI



Your family as a team

Good communication amongst family members helps you make changes to your child's difficult behaviour.

Speaking skills

Speaking skills refers to the actual words you use in everyday conversation. It's about:

- thinking before you speak.
- using "I" messages. This means saying what you feel or think, rather than blaming others for what they have already done or telling them what they should be doing. This helps everyone think about the situation without trying to defend themselves. For example: "I am worried about how Sandy will get to school" is a better start to a conversation than saying, "You ought to change your shift so you can drive Sandy to school."
- being specific in what you say. Remember the telephone test? Being specific also makes sure you don't exaggerate, which might lead others not to trust what you say.
- saying positive things about others. Even if you are not happy about most of what is happening, try to find something you can make a positive comment about.
- keeping your comments in the present.

Listening skills

The listening skills involve:

- active listening. Make it clear that you are concentrating on what the other person is saying.
- not interrupting. Conversations are like tennis matches. Wait your turn.
- summarising what others say. Summarising what the other person has said, and checking that you have got it right, helps make sure you really do understand their message.
- asking for additional information. If you're not quite sure you understand, ask open-ended questions. These are questions that cannot be answered with a yes or no. For example, "I'm not quite sure what you mean. Tell me a bit more about it" or, "Tell me an example of what you mean."

Improving your family's problem-solving skills

For some complex problems, or problems that have been going on for a long time, it can be useful to try the following problem-solving steps:

1. Identify the problem that is worrying you or other members of the family.
2. Come up with a number of possible solutions.
3. Consider the pros and cons of each solution. Agree on one to try out.
4. Try out the solution.
5. Support each other
 - a. Ask other family members how their tasks are going.
 - b. Give positive consequences to others for doing what they agreed to try
 - c. Make useful suggestions to others. If you can see how a change in what is happening might make it more likely to work, suggest it.
 - d. Offer assistance to others. If one person has a lot to do to try out the agreed solution, offer to help them with that or other things they have to do.

Involving everyone in problem-solving

Involve as many family members as possible. Sometimes just listening to the discussion helps everyone feel involved. Some families might decide that it is only appropriate to have certain members involved. If this is the case, those not involved need to be told, in a way they understand, what the outcome is. Different families will have different ideas.