

Positive Talk

Positive talk leads to positive action – a resource for staff about acceptable behaviours and positive language in the workplace

 Carewest
INNOVATIVE HEALTH CARE



Positive Talk is a series intended to help you communicate more effectively with the people around you – your co-workers, residents, clients and their families. This module highlights some common communication scenarios that may occur when speaking with people you meet each and every day – your co-workers. It provides several examples of appropriate and inappropriate responses. It also touches upon the importance of positive communication in everything we do and offers some basic communication techniques you can follow.



Communicating with your co-workers

At Carewest, the relationship you have with your co-workers is often as important as the one you have with the residents and clients you care for. As part of your role, it is important to be a positive and professional influence in the workplace – even if this behaviour hasn't yet been adopted by all your co-workers.

Being aware of how you communicate with your co-workers, residents, clients and families can ensure those relationships remain positive and constructive.

You can use this guide as a reference when handling various types of interpersonal situations in the workplace or as a learning guide for your own personal growth and development.

In health care, there are many different occupations working under one roof and we work towards a common goal – excellent care, customer service and communication for our residents, clients and families.

We need to remember we are all part of a team, working together to make sure we can offer the best care possible.

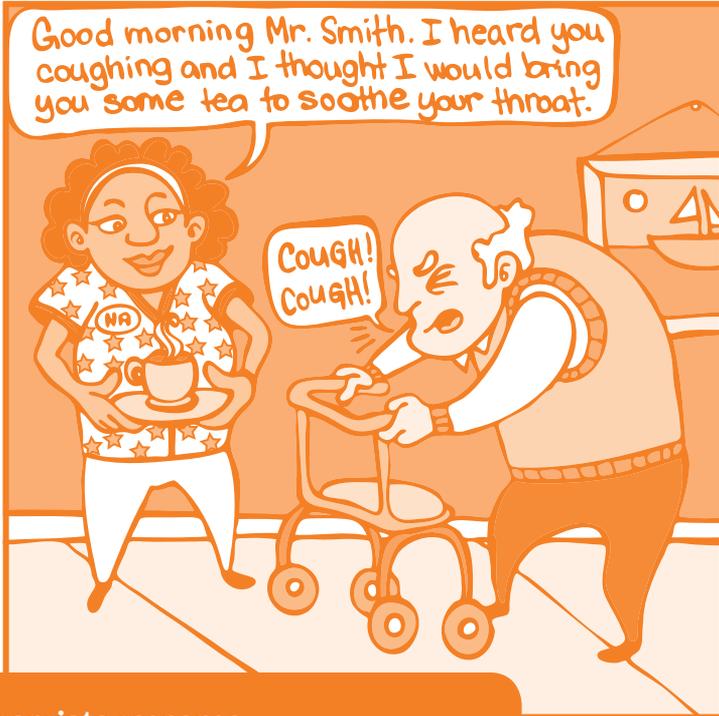
Maintaining positive relationships with your co-workers, whether they work right next to you or on a different unit altogether, is an important part of meeting those goals.

The following scenarios highlight some of the common situations that can occur everyday in the workplace and offer suggestions to help you handle them more effectively.

1. Scenario

Customer Service

A resident is ill with a dry cough. A nursing attendant starts her shift and notices him coughing.



Appropriate response

While some may have waited until Mr. Smith pressed the call bell, this nursing attendant anticipated the resident's needs and went above and beyond to bring him something to make him feel better.

"Good morning Mr. Smith. I heard you coughing and I thought I would bring you some tea to soothe your throat."

Inappropriate responses

- Ignoring him
- Waiting until he pressed the call button
- Taking a break in hopes someone else would deal with him
- Asking him to be quiet

2. Scenario

Punctuality

Several employees are consistently coming into work late and comment on one staff member's ability to always be on time.



Appropriate response

Being on time and ready to work is part of your job. If you know you have to work early, make sure you get the rest you need to be fresh the next day.

"I always make sure to leave the house a little earlier, especially in poor weather, because I know I need to be here at 0700 hrs."

Inappropriate responses

- Coming in late – even if it's only five minutes
- Leaving early – even if it's only five minutes
- Coming in on time and taking 15 minutes to put on makeup in the bathroom

3. Scenario

Respect

Two staff members are having a conversation while providing care. They are speaking a language other than English. A co-worker overhears them.



Appropriate response

Apologize for being unaware and make sure that when you are on the job, English is the only language you are speaking – unless you are speaking the language of a client or resident in an attempt to better communicate with them.

"I'm sorry. We are always supposed to include the resident in our conversations and speak English at work. I will make sure to do that from now on."

Inappropriate responses

- "It's not my fault, I don't know English well enough."
- "I was having a private conversation."
- "Stop eavesdropping."
- "If you don't like it, go somewhere else."

4. Scenario

Teamwork

You've finished a long and busy day. Just before leaving, one of your co-workers approaches you with a problem.



Appropriate response

Even though you have technically finished your shift, take steps to help your co-worker find what he or she needs. And if you do it with a smile on your face, you can be sure they will be there to help you when you need it.

"Of course! Let me show you where you can find the clean blankets."

Inappropriate responses

- "I'm done for the day."
- "Ask someone else."
- "Fine, I'll help you. But you're going to make me late."
- "Find it yourself."

Other common scenarios

When you encounter difficulty or need further guidance, always ask for help if you need it.

When someone approaches you for help, always take steps to help that person in whatever way you can.

Never assign blame or make assumptions about others when trying to solve a problem.

Say: "Yes, this is what I can do", instead of focusing on what you cannot do.

Tips for speaking positively

- Eliminate the word "no" from your vocabulary. Instead of saying, "I don't know," "I don't like that idea," and "it's not my responsibility," try saying "here is what I know," "let's try this" and "this is what I can do".
- If you don't know the answer or are stuck on a problem, find someone who can help.
- Treat everyone with respect – the way you would like to be treated.
- Keep your body language in check. Make eye contact, smile and listen attentively. Remember, 93 per cent of communication is non-verbal.



Making Decisions

No matter what your job description, you most likely have to make decisions on the job every day.

You may find most of your decisions were appropriate when applied to the situation. You may also find some decisions lead to questions and even conflict.

The following scenarios highlight some of the common situations that can occur when making decisions, what to do in those situations and what not to do.

5. Scenario

Initiative

After months of use, the staff bulletin board has started to look very messy. Two co-workers stop to comment on how it looks.



Appropriate response

Take pride in your work, initiate your own solutions and clean up the bulletin board. Take ownership of the problem and come up with ways to fix it, rather than wait for someone to fix it for you.

"You're right. Why don't you help me and we can just clean it up ourselves."

Inappropriate responses

- "Yeah, that bulletin board looks terrible. Why doesn't someone clean it?"
- "I wish someone would clean those bulletins. Or throw the whole thing out."
- "I think it looks fine."
- "It's not my job."

6. Scenario

Safety

Someone forgets to dispose of a needle because they didn't take the portable sharps container with them.



Appropriate response

If you made a mistake, take responsibility for your actions. Apologize, take steps to correct your error and to ensure it doesn't happen again.

"I was so busy that I didn't take the portable biohazard container with me. I was distracted and accidentally left the needle on the table. Let me dispose of it properly. It won't happen again."

Inappropriate responses

- "I don't know."
- "It wasn't me."
- "I was too busy."
- "Why does it matter?"

7. Scenario

Support

A staff member is working through her second day on the job and is moving slowly and with care. Two co-workers are impatient and start talking about making life hard for their new co-worker.



Appropriate response

Working in a busy environment can pose many challenges. We have to remember to welcome all new employees and relief staff. While maybe working slower than you, your new co-workers are an important part of the team in delivering excellent resident and client care. Be patient because they will one day be making your job easier.

"Considering she's only on her second day, we may want to give her more time. Do you remember how slow we were when we first started?"

Inappropriate response

- "Let's not talk to her and make her uncomfortable."
- "Let's ask her why she's moving so slowly."
- "Let's not help her in any way so she leaves."

Non-Productive Behaviours

Sometimes we don't speak to or address our co-workers in the most respectful manner. Sometimes we don't show up to work on time or sometimes we find ourselves talking in a negative manner, whether it is about a fellow co-worker or your job. Here are some examples of things you should try to avoid to ensure a healthy and productive work environment.

Examples of what not to do:

- Criticizing another co-worker
- Coming to work late
- Complaining about your job
- Comparing one staff member to another
- Competing for attention
- Telling families we are short-staffed and overworked

Avoid:

- Always saying no
- Ignoring instructions
- Assigning blame
- Swearing
- Yelling at staff, residents or clients
- Gossiping or telling secrets

Acceptable Behaviours Reference Guide

When in doubt, check these pages if you are unsure of some aspect of behaviour in the workplace.

Accountability

1. Accepts responsibility for actions
2. Meets Carewest expectations
3. Completes assignments and finishes what is started
4. Follows standard operating principles and professional standards
5. Comes to work on time and ready to work
6. Keeps knowledgeable and up-to-date
7. Asks for help when needed
8. Does what they say they will
9. Takes responsibility for the decisions made and the results that follow

Communication

1. Demonstrates passion and enthusiasm for work
2. Participates in and encourages discussion
3. Actively listens and questions to gain understanding
4. Communicates clearly and concisely in written and oral form
5. Shares information and ideas, gives and asks for feedback
6. Remains approachable and positive
7. Helps others solve problems

Conflict Resolution

1. Remains calm
2. Has a willingness to solve problems
3. Participates in creating a positive environment
4. Prepares for the conversation and starts with the facts
5. Focuses on the behaviour, not the person
6. Avoids making judgments and assumptions
7. Removes blame
8. Goes to the source of the problem
9. Determines the other person's point of view
10. Listens with the intent to understand
11. Asks questions for clarification
12. Works on solutions together to agree on a plan
13. Follows up

Customer/Client Focus

1. Delivers exceptional client care
2. Creates a positive image for Carewest among clients, families and visitors
3. Treats each client with respect and concern
4. Anticipates client needs and promptly responds accordingly
5. Listens and asks questions to understand client need
6. Involves clients and/or families where possible in the solution

7. Owns the problem, does not “pass the buck” and seeks help if unsure
8. Says “yes, here’s what I can do”
9. Generates creative ideas and fresh approaches to customer concerns
10. Takes initiative to deliver better service
11. Seeks ways to protect the work environment and improve safety of clients and fellow employees
12. Creates positive socialization opportunities for residents and clients

Decision Making

1. Identifies, defines and considers all important issues before making a decision
2. Remains open to new information and changes direction if the situation warrants it
3. Makes effective and timely decisions
4. Involves others in the decision, especially if it affects their work
5. Identifies and validates solutions
6. Looks for alternatives and evaluates the potential risk
7. Contributes creative solutions and suggestions
8. Implements the solution and follows up
9. Supports others in their decisions

Professionalism

1. Represents Carewest in a positive manner
2. Leads by example, acts as a role model and holds self and others to the highest professional and technical standards
3. Treats people with respect
4. Takes pride in their work
5. Accepts change and setbacks in stride
6. Understands and has the ability to interpret policies and procedures
7. Displays personal strength and composure in stressful situations
8. Looks for ways to make things better
9. Prioritizes by putting first things first

Respect

1. Listens and considers others’ ideas and information
2. Shares ideas and information in a timely manner
3. Is honest and straightforward with co-workers and clients
4. Treats all people fairly, with respect and recognizes the diversity in employees
5. Anticipates the needs of others
6. Offers to help
7. Small courtesies and kindness given freely
8. Makes and keeps promises
9. Exercises discretion in handling sensitive and confidential information
10. Communicates in an open and honest manner
11. Provides encouragement to teammates

In support of our Carewest Frame of Reference,
our Philosophy of Care is:

**“To provide our residents and clients with
quality care in safe, comfortable and
supportive environments.”**

The Guiding Principles to the Philosophy include working together to:

- Preserve and promote **dignity** through respectful, individualized approaches to care;
- Provide **kind** and **compassionate** care and service;
- Foster **supportive relationships** between all staff, clients, families and communities;
- Foster an environment of **learning** to promote excellence in care and service.

