

Wisconsin Public Psychiatry Network Teleconference (WPPNT)

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## Promoting Recovery Through The Practice of Trauma-Sensitive Communication (TSC) Skills



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Donna Riemer, RN-PMHN

November 17, 2016

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## Objectives



- Begin to understand components of trauma-sensitive communication
- Begin to recognize the impact our words have on one's history of trauma and recovery
- Begin to challenge ourselves to listen, hear, and respond to the feelings and needs behind the message
- Create curiosity

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## Assertive Communication Models

- D.E.S.C.
- Care Fronting
- Assertiveness
- I.D.E.A.L.
- D.A.T.S
- CNVC

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## D.E.S.C.

- Describe situation
- Express Feelings
- Specify what you want
- Consequences (Benefits)

Addiction Services of Thames Valley  
<http://adstv.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/DESC-Model.pdf>

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## Care Fronting

- Observations and descriptions (not judgments)
- Ideas and information/alternatives (not advice or answers)
- What and how (not why)

David Augsburg  
 Caring Enough to Confront

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## Assertiveness

- Value yourself and your rights
- Identify your needs and wants
- Acknowledge responsibility for own behaviors
- Express thoughts and feelings in healthy manner
- Receive criticism/compliments positively
- Use “I” statements make a request

Mind Tools  
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Assertiveness.htm>

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## I.D.E.A.L.

- Identify and understand the problem
- Express concerns and Feelings
- Ask for others perspective and for change
- List outcomes

Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program

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## D.A.T.S.

- Differentiate (separate yourself from the issue)
- Acknowledge situation and feelings
- Transfer (bring topic back to persons concerns)
- Be solution focused

Anna Barranowski  
 Traumatology Institute, Canada

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## What If

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Instead of responding through:  
Stimulus → Response

There is an option to choose:  
Stimulus → **BREATHE, THINK, CHOOSE** → Response

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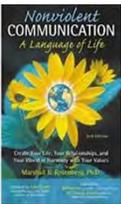
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## Rosenberg's Compassionate Communication Model

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- Choose our response in any situation
- Practice of empathic communication by recognizing and setting aside judgments and connecting at a feelings and needs level



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## Compassionate Communication Skills

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- Observation (acknowledge judgments and set aside)
- Feelings (“I” statements)
- Needs (“I” statements)
- Request (without demands)

Center for Nonviolent Communication  
cnvc.org

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## TSC: Based On The Work Of Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D.



“Violence can happen even when we are just talking.”



M. Rosenberg  
Center for Nonviolent Communication  
[www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)

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## Four Steps



- Observation (absent judgments)
- Feelings (connect to needs)
- Needs (connect to feelings)
- Request (absent demands)

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## Why TSC Skills?



TSC is consistent with standards of practice:

- Psychiatric mental health nursing
- Peer support
- Safety
- Do no harm

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**Why TSC Skills?**



TSC is consistent with evidenced-based practice concepts:

- Recovery
- Sanctuary
- Person-centered Care
- Trauma-informed Care

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**Why TSC Skills?**



Versatility:

- Useful any time, anywhere
- Cultivates safe, respectful, healthy, trusting relationships
- Emphasizes empowerment, responsibility, self-advocacy
- Diffuses emotionally charged situations with assertiveness, empathy and respect

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**Why TSC Skills?**



Versatility:

- Emotional self regulation skill (self care)
- Mediation
- Invites partnership, inclusivity
- Solution finding skill

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**As A Recovery Champion**



I ask why not?

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**Requires Self Awareness**

- I am responsible for my own feelings, needs, beliefs, choices, behaviors, health and wellness
- My feelings come from my needs, my beliefs, and what I tell myself (not from others)
- When my emotions are high, my hearing is low
- I have the power to escalate or calm myself, situations
- Skipping steps in the process will decrease chances of getting my needs met

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**Requires Making Choices**

- Give up the belief that my feelings come from others
- Adopt the belief that others words and behaviors are simply “triggers” and I can choose my response
- Make the commitment to replace judgments and demands with empathy
- Consider the practice of choosing my response before entering into the interaction by asking myself:  
 “Do I want to enter a dance floor or a boxing ring?”

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### Sam's TSC Example

**Situation:** I was a participant in a three-day peer support training. The room was set up with chairs in a circle without tables. Some attendees were objecting to the way the room was set up and at break one person was prepared to leave the training. My initial reaction was that the trainees should be more cooperative and also that the trainers should have responded better to the objections as they were raised.

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### Observation

- Acknowledge and own personal thoughts, beliefs, values, and judgments, then set them aside
- Make observations without judgments, (finger-point, blame, one upping, minimizing), just to name a few
- Responding with judgments will increase risk of: breaking connection, increasing defensiveness, decreasing chance of meeting needs.
- Ask "Do I want to enter boxing ring, or dance floor?"

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### Sam: Observation

Personal thoughts, beliefs, values, and judgments:  
 "I thought the attendees should have been more cooperative and also that the trainers should have done a better job of responding to the objections."

Observations without judgments:  
 "The room was set up with chairs in a circle without tables. Some attendees were objecting to the way the room was set up and one person was prepared to leave the training."

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## Feelings Inventory

- Identify feelings. (Feelings are just that. Feelings.)
- Comes from needs.
- No need to explain or defend feelings.
- Placing “you” in the feelings statement is a way that we disguise the judgment. Also, it makes “My feelings” about the other person: “I feel you should know better!” is not a feeling. It is a judgment.

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## Sam: Feelings

The room was set up with chairs in a circle without tables. Some attendees were objecting to the way the room was set up and one person was prepared to leave the training.

**“I felt sad, worried, and tense.”**

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## Needs Inventory

- Identify your needs (no need to defend)
- Bases on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
- Needs are with “I” statements
- Needs and feelings are connected (not to another person)
- Placing “You” statements here makes the other person responsible for your needs. “I need you to.....”

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## Sam: Needs

The room was set up with chairs in a circle without tables. Some attendees were objecting to the way the room was set up and one person was prepared to leave the training.

I felt sad, worried, tense

**“I needed peace, empathy, compassion, inclusion.”**

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## Requests

- Made without demands
- Solution focused
- One way to tell if it is actually a demand is to look at your response. How do you respond if the person is unable or unwilling to meet your request?

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## Sam: Requests

The room was set up with chairs in a circle without tables. Some attendees were objecting to the way the room was set up and one person was prepared to leave the training.

- > I felt sad, worried, tense
- > I needed peace, empathy, compassion, inclusion

**“I requested the group to work together to find a solution that would work for everyone.”**

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**Lessons Learned**

- Setting aside my judgments allowed me to approach the situation in terms of needs.
- I am discovering that with conflicts, instead of conflicting needs, there are conflicting strategies for meeting needs.

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**Lessons Learned**

Through listening, hearing, inclusion and the exchange of empathy among group members, the group engaged in solution finding dialog that resulted in all members getting their needs met and no one leaving the training.

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**Conclusion**

You might now see how making the choice to choose responses” and stay solution focused without judgment and demands can:

- Either escalate or calm the self and situations
- Decrease risk of defensiveness from others
- Promote solution finding so that everyone can get their needs met without giving up or giving in

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**Conclusion**



We hope that it has become more clear that being mindful of the words we choose is consistent with:

- Standards of practice
- Do no harm
- Trauma-informed care
- Sanctuary
- Person-centered care
- Recovery

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**Resources**



- Center for Nonviolent Communication.  
<http://www.cnvc.org>
- Riemer, D. Creating Sanctuary: Reducing Violence In A Maximum Security Forensic Psychiatric Hospital Unit. On The Edge, volume 15 number 1, Spring 2009. International Association Forensic Nurses (IAFN)  
<http://www.forensicnurses.org/general/custom.asp?page=302>

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