

# Communication: What are we really saying?

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Long Term Care Association

# Disclaimer

- Not an expert
- Don't have all the answers
- Do think about communication alot
- Deliberately try to be better at communicating
- Share with you what I have learned

# The ability to communicate

- A critically important life skill.



**THE FAR SIDE / GARY LARSON**

**What we say to dogs**

Okay, Ginger! I've had it!  
You stay out of the garbage!  
Understand, Ginger? Stay out  
of the garbage, or else!



**What they hear**

blah blah GINGER blah  
blah blah blah blah  
blah blah GINGER blah  
blah blah blah blah...



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# What we say to cats and what they hear



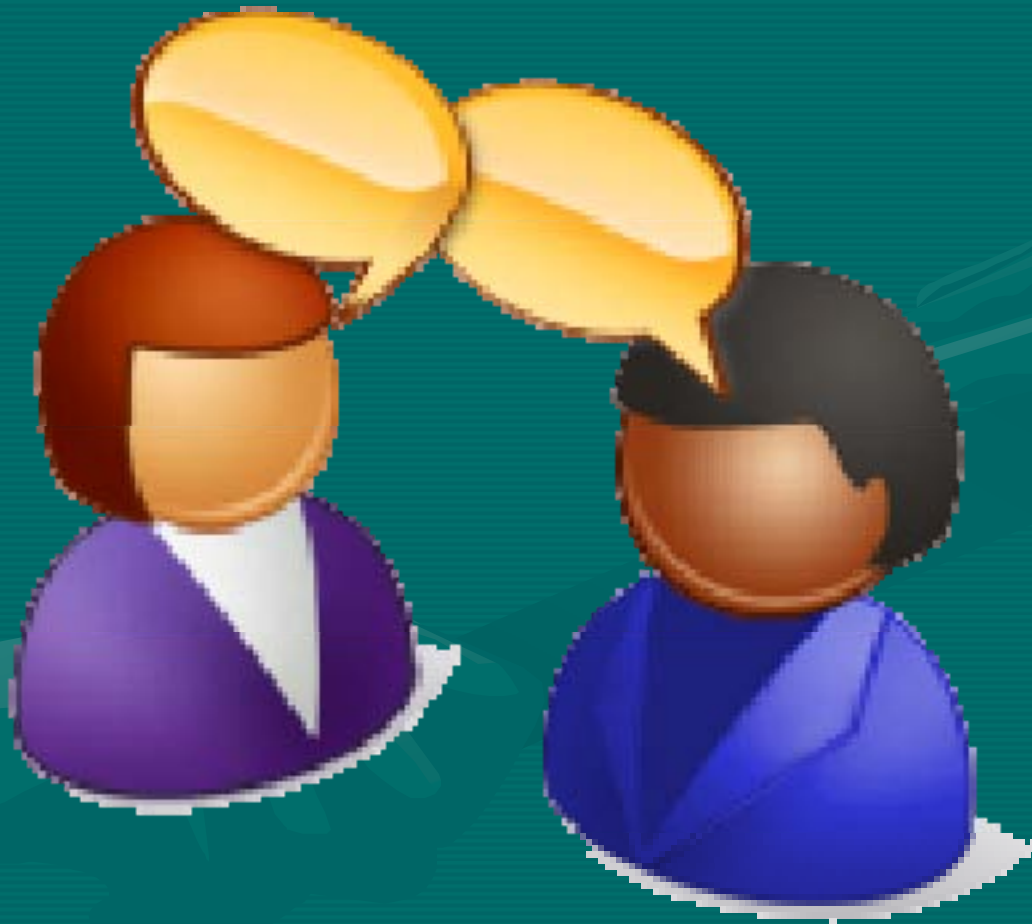
What do we say to our clients ?



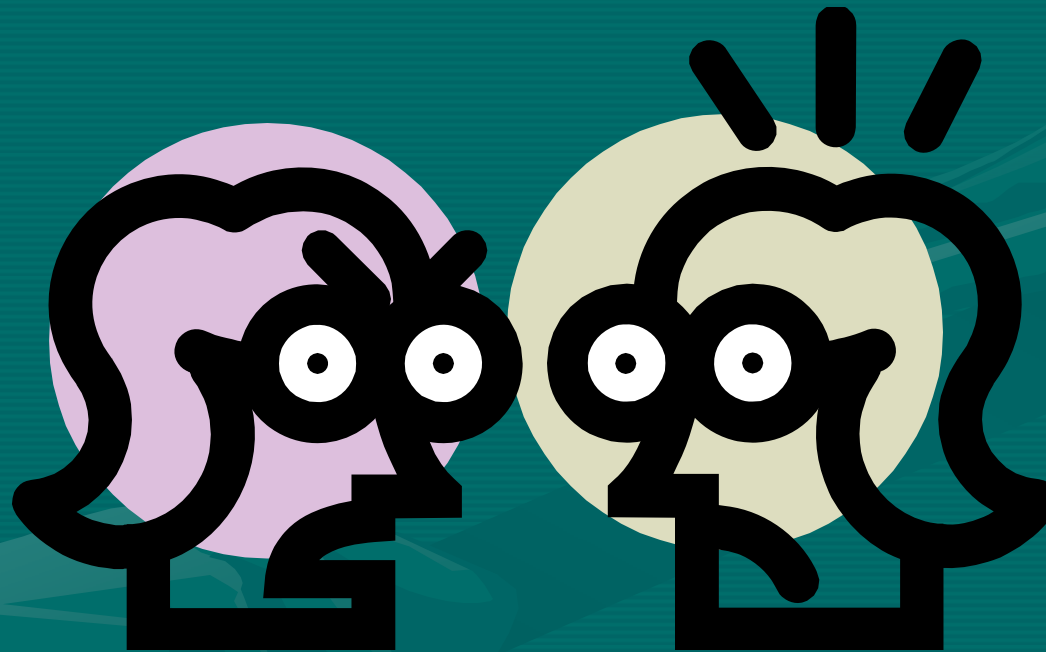
What do they hear ?



What do we say to each other ?



What was just heard



Are we communicating or just  
talking *at* each other



# Communication

- What it is:
  - Sharing of information, feelings, values.
  - More than one person.
  - Two way interaction
  - Sending and receiving
  - Speaking, listening, reading, writing
- What it is not:
  - One way conversation
  - Telling



# Good communication

- Contributes positively to the relationship.
- Clear, relevant, consistent, purposeful
- Honest
- Respectful
- Goal directed
- Creates a shared understanding
  - May or may not solve the perceived problem
- Builds trust, capacity
- Alleviates tension, conflict

# Poor communication

- Unclear
- Unsafe
- Lacks honesty or sincerity
- No investment in the relationship
- Lack of trust
- Not goal directed
- No significant outcome
- May be satisfying for one party



# It's not about you

Don't take it personally, but do think  
about what you can do

# Our clients



# W5

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- Why



# Who: Start with me

- Each of us is responsible for our own behavior
- Know where you are coming from
  - Are you making assumptions
  - Are you reframing through your own lens or agenda?
  - What are you feeling?
  - Are you afraid e.g. apology/disclosure

# Who: Start with me

- Do you talk in the mirror?
- Can you see the future?
  - Anticipate in such great gruesome detail that you know what the outcome will be, in spite of your cutting witty repartee?
- Do you have history/experience?

# Your goals

- Do you need to be the victor
- What do you want to happen?
- Get back, put someone in their place, catch someone red handed
- Short term win with a heavy price



# The Outcome

- Three possibilities
  - Positioning
  - Compromise  $1 + 1 = 1.5$
  - Win-win  $1 + 1 = 10$
- Winning the battle but losing the war



# Who are you attempting to communicate with

- What is the relationship?
  - With you, the client
- Power
- Authority/Decision maker
- Expertise
- Where are they coming from ?



# Making a Superhero out of an advocate

- Feeling protective is normal
- Need for reassurance, information, build trust
- An ally or an opponent



# Multigenerational Workplaces



# What are you saying?

- What is the issue?
- Why is it important?
- What needs to be said and to whom?
- What is the goal?
- What needs to happen to meet that goal?
- How does everyone win?



# Verbal communication

- Words
- Tone
- Volume
- Style
- Syntax



# Self Control

- A leadership attribute
- Your secret to success



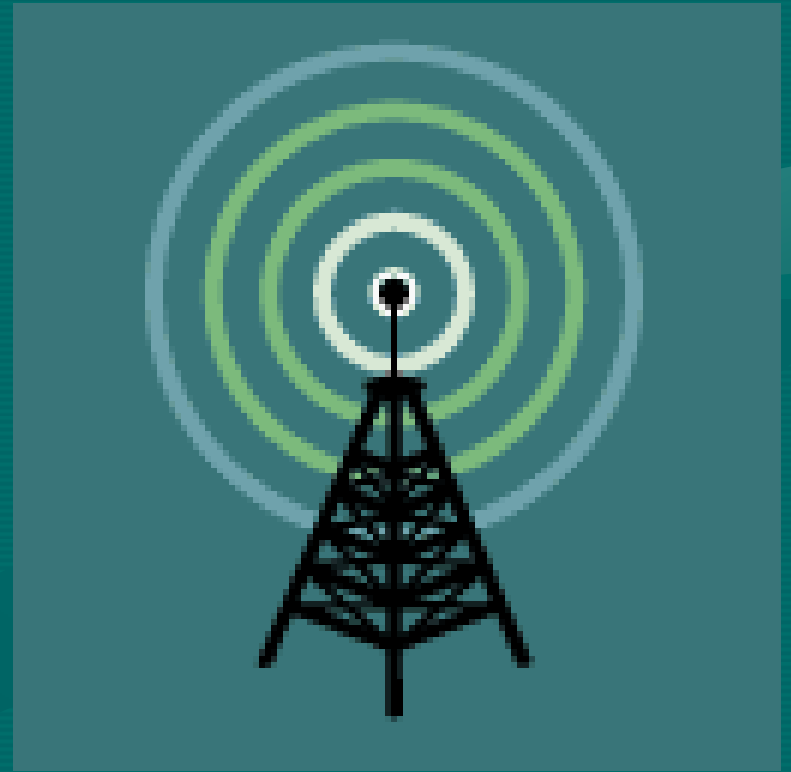
# Non verbal communication

- You are communicating even when you're not speaking
  - 10% words
  - 30% sounds
  - 60% non verbal
- Facial expressions
- General huffing and puffing
- Behavior
- Body language
  - eye contact,
  - standing or sitting



# Secret or telepathic messages

- The dangers of making assumptions



# Not-so-secret communication



# Risk

- Silence
- Paralyzed by anxiety
- Intimidation
- Cultural barrier
- Pride
- Mistrust
- Overpowered

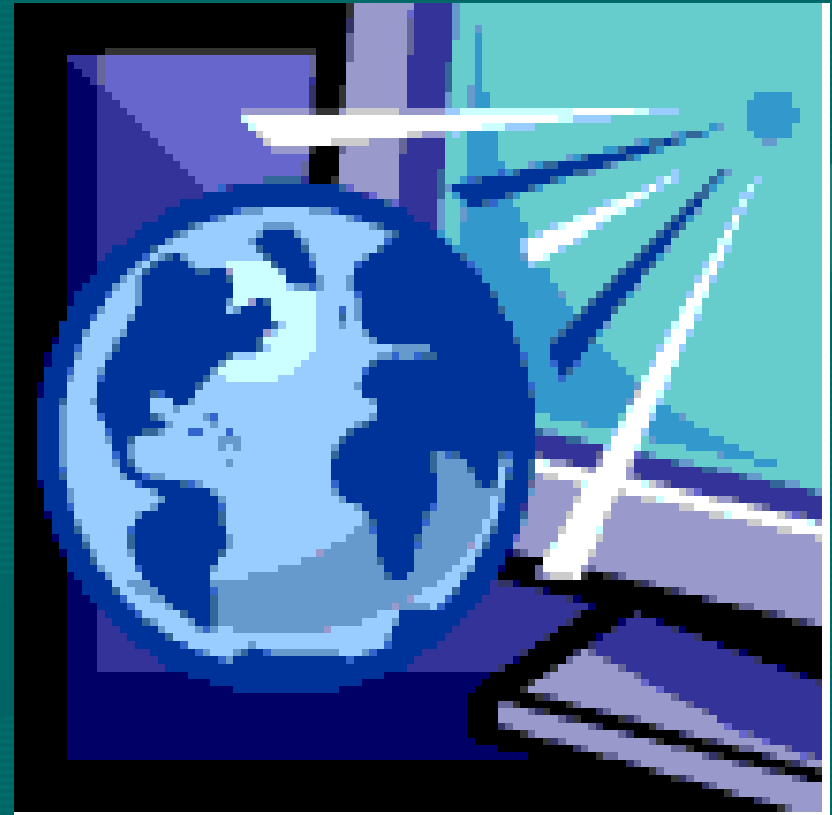
# How are you saying it ?

- Language
  - Choice of words
  - Talking above someone
  - In a language only some understand
- Tone and syntax
- Making an accusation, assumption



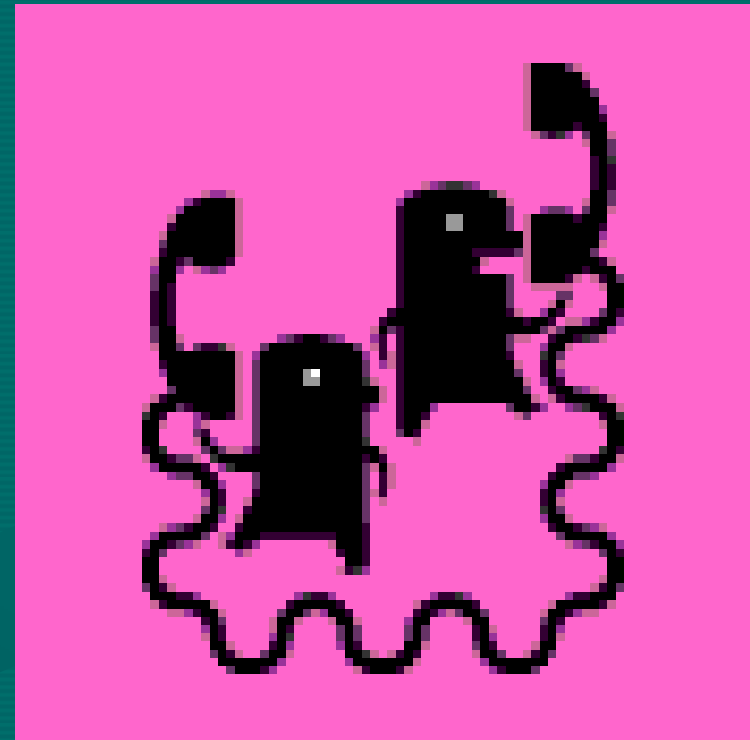
# The internet and email

- SUP
- LOL
- The writer wishes to withdraw the message previously sent.....



# Telephone communication

- No replacement for face to face.
- Must be careful of tone, choice of words, feeling of safety from the other side of the phone.
- May say something you would never have said in person.
- Don't use it as a shield.



# The Human Connection

- The power of touch



# How is it being perceived ?

- You can't be right if you get it wrong
- Honesty
- Sincerity
- Respect
- Trust
- Pride



# How is it being perceived ?

- What are they hearing?
  - Is the other person able to understand
  - Are they motivated to communicate
  - Are they jumping to conclusions or making assumptions
  - What lens are they looking through?
- Seek to understand then be understood

# The art of listening

- Ears
- Eyes
- Body language: conveying openness
- Attentive
  - No blackberry, checking the watch, putting on the coat
  - Asking questions, verifying, acknowledging
  - 6<sup>th</sup> sense

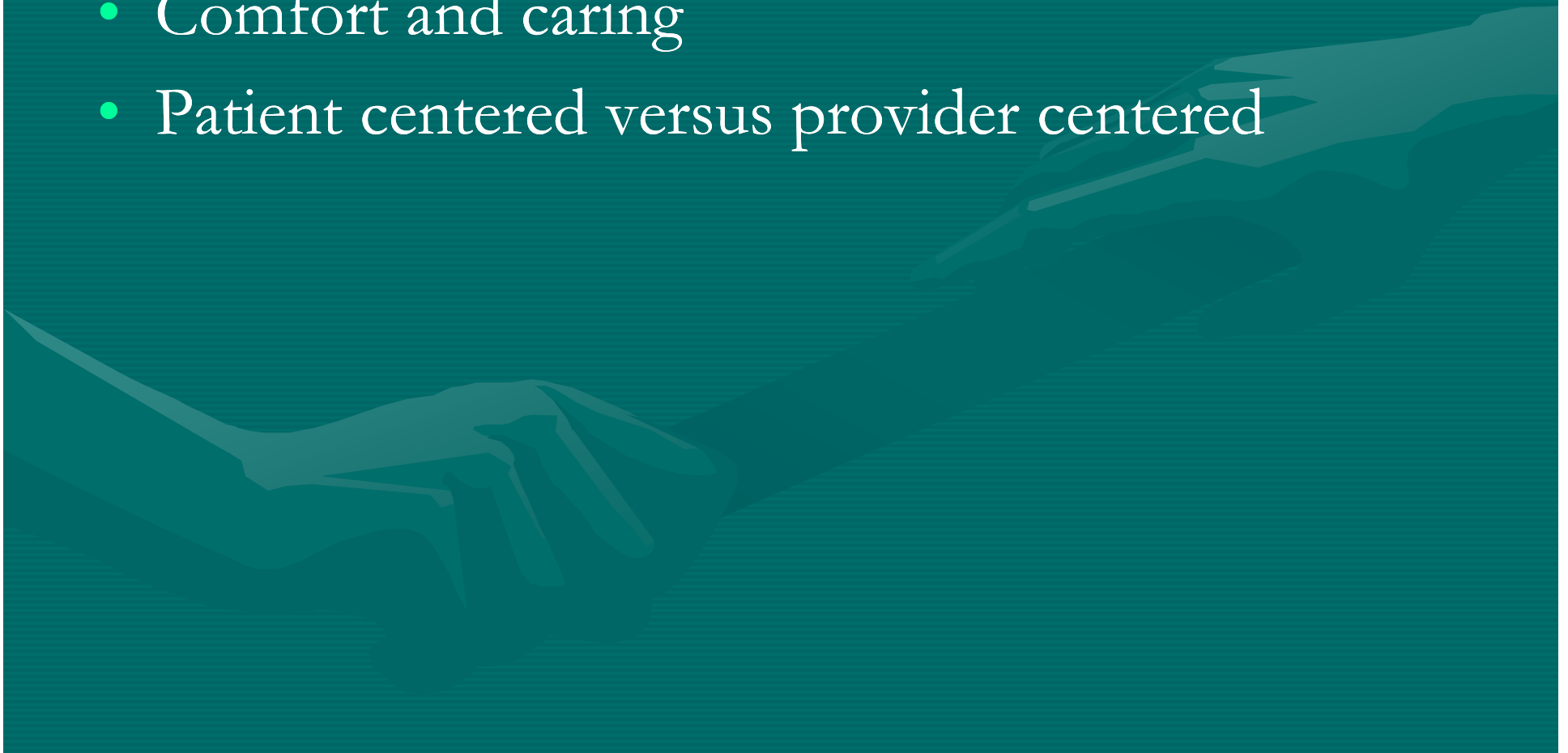
# Where are you communicating ?

- No audience please !
- Environment:
  - a private conversation in a public venue,
  - Across a desk
  - The interrogation light



# What message is the setting sending?

- Privacy and respect
- Comfort and caring
- Patient centered versus provider centered



# When: Good timing

- What is the most appropriate time to communicate
- Should meet the needs of both parties
- Ensure you have the correct information
- Is everyone present who needs to be there
- Is there time pressure

Why?



# Communicating issues of concern

- Identifying issues can be difficult
- Many speak with emotion, identify and focus on feelings and impact on self
- Message received is that the person speaking is having difficult time coping
- Result is frustration, conflict and inaction.

# Communicating issues of concern

- What is the issue?
- Why is it important?
  - Safety, standards, complaint
- How did it become an issue?
- What can be done about it?
- What do you want the other person to do about it?

# Answering questions

- It is normal to have questions
- Do not be afraid
- What do they want?
- How are you reacting to the question (self awareness)
- The problem might not be the question, it might be the discomfort of the staff person.

# Answering a question

- What is the question?
- What is the answer to the question?
- Are there any restrictions on what you can say?
- Do you have the authority to answer the question
- Who else can answer it and are they available

# When things don't go your way

- The difference between communicating disappointment and making an accusation
- Safe versus unsafe interaction
- Defensiveness
- Shutdown



# Strategies

- Creating a safe environment
- Opening with mutual goals/values/understanding
- Sharing your observation or concern
- Asking
- Giving the person the opportunity to address the issue
- Developing a common plan

# Outcomes

- Honest
- Clear
- Real
- Goal/value driven not emotionally charged
- Respectful
- Assumes the best of the person
- Allows each to leave with head held high
- Provides an opportunity for success

R-E-S-P-E-C-T



# Understanding the importance and power of human interaction

