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## **Effective Communication Techniques with Mothers and Families in the Postpartum Period (NOTES FOR PROFESSIONALS, CAREGIVERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS)**

### **1. Greeting and Warm-Up**

“Good [morning/afternoon], everyone! Welcome to today’s session on *Effective Communication Techniques in the Postpartum Period*. I’m excited to explore this important topic with you because the postpartum period is a critical time for mothers, babies, and their families. The way we communicate during this time can make a significant impact on their well-being.”

**Question: What kind of challenges did you have in the postpartum period? Feeding, sleep deprivation, and emotional fluctuations?**

### **2. Setting the Scene**

“Let’s take a moment to think about what happens during the postpartum period. It’s often called the ‘fourth trimester,’ a time of profound change, both physically and emotionally, for the mother. Families are adjusting to their new roles, learning to care for a newborn, and navigating challenges like feeding, sleep deprivation, and emotional fluctuations.”

Healthcare providers or support professionals are often the first point of contact for these families. The way they communicate—what they say, how they say it, and how well they listen—can provide reassurance, build trust, and identify needs they may not even know how to express. Poor communication, on the other hand, can lead to misunderstandings, feelings of isolation, or even worsening of postpartum concerns, like anxiety or depression.”

### **3. The Role of Effective Communication**

“Now, you might ask, ‘What does effective communication look like in this context?’ It’s not just about giving information or instructions. It’s about:

1. Actively listening to what the mother and family are saying—and what they’re not saying.
2. Validating their emotions, whether it’s joy, fear, exhaustion, or frustration.
3. Providing clear, simple explanations and solutions that resonate with their specific situation.

4. Respecting their cultural practices and beliefs, even if they differ from our professional recommendations.”

“By mastering these skills, we can help mothers feel seen, heard, and supported during this transformative time. It also strengthens the family unit, ensuring everyone feels included and valued in the care process.”

#### **4. Transition to Techniques**

“Now we’ll dive deeper into specific techniques for effective communication, and you’ll get a chance to practice these skills through a scenario-based activity. By the end of today’s session, you’ll feel more confident in your ability to engage with mothers and families during the postpartum period.”

## **Introduction to Communication Techniques**

"Now that we understand the importance of communication in the postpartum period, let's focus on six key techniques that can make our interactions more effective and meaningful. These techniques will help us connect better with mothers and families, ensuring they feel supported, understood, and empowered."

## **Explanation of Techniques**

### **Technique 1: Active Listening**

"Active listening is the foundation of effective communication. It's more than just hearing what someone says—it's about truly understanding them. To practice active listening:

- Maintain eye contact to show you're focused on the speaker.
- Avoid interrupting, even if you think you know the solution. Let them finish their thought.
- Paraphrase or summarize what they've said to confirm your understanding. For example: 'So, if I understand correctly, you're feeling unsure about breastfeeding because it's been painful. Is that right?'  
This not only shows that you're listening but also encourages them to elaborate."

### **Example 1: Active Listening**

- A mother says, *"I feel like I'm not producing enough milk, and it's making me so stressed."*
- Your response using active listening:  
*"It sounds like you're worried about your milk supply, and that's adding a lot of stress for you. Let's talk about what you've been experiencing and what we can do to help."*
- This confirms that you've understood her concern and opens the door to finding solutions.

### **Technique 2: Empathy**

"Empathy is about acknowledging and validating emotions. Postpartum can be an emotional time, and mothers need to feel that their feelings are normal. Use empathetic language like:

- 'It's completely understandable to feel tired with all the changes happening.'
- 'Many mothers experience similar challenges; you're not alone in this.'  
Even if you can't personally relate to their experience, expressing empathy helps build trust and reassurance."

### **Example 2: Empathy**

- A mother shares: *"I'm so tired, and it feels like I'll never sleep again. I don't know how I'll manage."*
- Your response using empathy:  
*"It's completely normal to feel exhausted at this stage. You're going through so many changes,*

*and it can feel overwhelming. Let's explore some small steps to help you rest and manage your energy."*

- This validates her feelings and shows understanding without judgment.

### **Technique 3: Open-Ended Questions**

"Open-ended questions encourage the mother and family to share more freely. Instead of asking, 'Are you feeling okay?' which might lead to a simple yes or no, try:

- 'How are you feeling today?'
  - 'Can you tell me more about how things are going at home?'
- These types of questions give them space to express their feelings and concerns, making it easier for you to identify their needs."

### **Technique 4: Clarity and Simplicity**

"Medical jargon can be intimidating and confusing, especially for new parents. Always use plain language to explain concepts. For example, instead of saying, 'Your baby's latch needs improvement,' you can say, 'Let's work on helping your baby attach more comfortably to make breastfeeding easier.' Clear communication makes them feel more confident and less overwhelmed."

### **Technique 5: Non-Verbal Communication**

"Non-verbal cues can often say more than words. Pay attention to your body language:

- Use open, welcoming gestures.
  - Nod occasionally to show understanding.
  - Maintain a calm and approachable tone of voice.
- These small actions can make mothers and families feel safe and supported, even when words are limited."

### **Technique 6: Cultural Sensitivity**

"Every family has unique cultural practices and beliefs, especially when it comes to postpartum care. Show respect for their traditions and preferences by asking questions like:

- 'Are there any specific practices you'd like to follow during this time?'
  - 'How can we support your family's needs while following the care plan?'
- Acknowledging their cultural values fosters trust and collaboration."

### **Example 6: Cultural Sensitivity**

- A family member mentions: *"In our culture, the grandmother usually takes care of the baby during the first month, and the mother focuses on resting and recovery."*
- Your response using cultural sensitivity: *"That's a beautiful tradition. Rest is so important for new mothers. How can we ensure you're getting the recovery time you need while also addressing any concerns you might have about your baby's care?"*
- This shows respect for their cultural practices while gently opening a conversation about postpartum care needs.

### 3. Transition to Discussion

"These six techniques—active listening, empathy, open-ended questions, clarity, non-verbal communication, and cultural sensitivity—are essential tools for effective communication. Now, I'd like to hear from you. Which of these techniques can be used? Which ones do you think might be the most challenging to apply?"

### How did you get support from any other family members, friends or healthcare providers?

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### Scenario Activity: Role-Playing

**Objective:** Apply the communication techniques in a simulated postpartum scenario.

#### Setup:

- Divide participants into small groups of 3-4.
- Assign roles within each group:
  - One as the mother.
  - One as a family member (e.g., partner, grandmother).
  - One or two as healthcare providers.

#### Scenario:

- **Background Information:**

A 3-day postpartum mother, Emma, is visited at home by a healthcare provider. She's experiencing breastfeeding challenges, feeling tired, and is worried about bonding with her baby. Her partner is supportive but also overwhelmed by household responsibilities. The grandmother is present and suggests supplementing with formula, creating tension.

#### Task for Participants:

1. **Healthcare Providers:** Use the communication techniques discussed to address the following:
  - Emma's breastfeeding concerns.
  - Emotional well-being.
  - Relationship dynamics with her family.
2. **Mother and Family Member(s):** Role-play realistic emotions and concerns to challenge the healthcare provider's communication skills.

#### Time Allocation:

- 10 minutes for role-play.
- 5 minutes for each group to debrief (self-assess and receive feedback).

### Scenario Setup

#### Roles:

- **Mother (Emma):** 3-day postpartum, experiencing breastfeeding challenges and feeling emotionally vulnerable.
- **Partner:** Supportive but overwhelmed with household responsibilities.
- **Grandmother:** Suggesting formula, creating tension.

- **Healthcare Provider:** Addresses breastfeeding, emotional well-being, and family dynamics.

### Example Dialogue

**Mother (Emma):**

*"I'm not sure if my baby is getting enough milk. It hurts so much to breastfeed, and he's always crying. I feel like I'm not good at this."*

**Partner:**

*"I'm doing my best, but between work and everything else, it's a lot. I just want her to feel better."*

**Grandmother:**

*"We always used formula in our family; it worked just fine. I don't see why you're struggling with breastfeeding so much."*

**Healthcare Provider:**

*"Emma, it's completely normal to feel this way, but it doesn't mean you're not doing a great job. Let's explore ways to make breastfeeding more comfortable for you."*

*(To the partner): "You're doing a lot to support Emma. Let's talk about how to make things easier for both of you."*

*(To the grandmother): "I understand that formula has worked well in your family's experience. Let's also consider how we can support Emma with breastfeeding while respecting her choices."\**

**Q: Would you like to share experiences or ask questions about real-life applications?**

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**Question: What can parents do to increase bonding in the postpartum period?**

**Go to Module 4, Video 3:**

**Question: WHAT KIND OF THINGS SHOULD WE DO BEFORE WE VISIT THE NEW MOTHERS?**

**VISITS: GO TO MODULE 4 VIDEO 4**

**QUESTIONS: Have you heard any words that you didn't want to hear from the visitors during the visits in the postpartum period?**

**FORBIDDEN WORDS: GO TO MODULE 4 VIDEO 5**