

Communication

How To Talk About Tough Stuff With Important People

CAN DO
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

WEBINAR 
WEDNESDAYS

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Wednesday, November 8
SPECIAL WEBINAR
What is Smoldering MS?



Thursday, November 9
JUMPSTART
Listening as Well as Talking;
Strategies for Better Communication

Tuesday, November 14
YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED
Communication

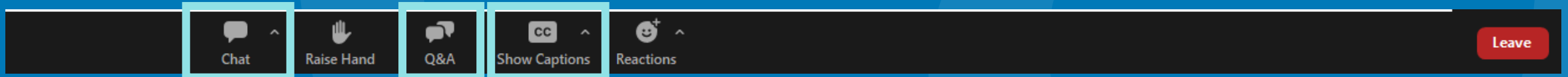
Wednesday, November 29
MS MOVES



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How to Ask Questions During the Webinar

Type in your questions using the Questions Box



Provide comments and engage with the speakers and audience using the **Chat Box**

NEW! Closed captioning

YOUR SPEAKERS



Amber Landers
Psychologist

California



Betty Mathew
**Speech Language
Pathologist**

Georgia

LEARNING OBJECTIVES



1

Recognize that changes to the brain can affect communication

2

Understand the importance of clear communication and effective listening when dealing with tough topics

3

Receive tips for conveying feelings, needs, and requests all kinds of relationships

4

Learn strategies for resolving conflict

**What's happening in the
brain with MS?**



- MS is a disease of the central nervous system, causing damage to your brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves
- The damage is a result of lesions (areas of tissue damage)
- MS can also contribute to brain atrophy (shrinkage) over time
 - This happens with all people as we age but can occur more quickly in people with MS
- Cognitive and emotional changes are related to the number of lesions and location of the lesions in the brain



What Changes Are Happening?



Cognitive Changes

- Memory
- Attention
- Information processing
- Word finding
- Executive functions

Emotional Changes

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Emotional lability
- Change in self-esteem



- MS can impact any part of the brain so **any** cognitive and emotional functions can be impaired.
- Emotional changes can also be a result of grief and changes in self-image due to the physical and cognitive changes.
- Symptoms can vary from mild to severe

How Cognition Affects Communication



- Difficulty maintaining focus or attention in a conversation
- Staying on topic and taking turns
- Remembering information (immediate and short-term)
- Reduced insight and awareness
- Difficulty organizing thoughts and finding the right words
- Needing more time to comprehend and process information
- Brain fog

MS Makes Communication More Difficult

- The effects of MS can profoundly influence an individual's capacity with work, personal life, and family responsibilities
- Loved ones may not fully grasp the extent to which the changes can reshape or change one's identity and role



Communication Barriers



When cognition is impaired, communicating changes you are experiencing can be challenging due to:

- Brain fog
- Memory and attention deficits
- Difficulty finding the right words
- Slowed processing speed

How information is HEARD is also impacted.

- Often, people with MS struggle with understanding information and this can also result in communication challenges

Situations In Which Communication Can Be Difficult



Speaking With Your Healthcare Team

- Physician, Nurse, Neurologist, Front Desk staff, etc.

Interacting With Family and Loved Ones

- Partners, Spouse, Siblings, Children, Parents, Friends, etc.

Collaborating At Work

- Co-workers, Managers, Customers, Clients

Running Errands/Completing Tasks

- Cashier, Phone Calls, Ordering food, etc.

Which situation is the most difficult for you to communicate in?

A Speaking with your healthcare team

B Collaborating in your place of work

C Interacting with family/loved ones

D Running errands or completing tasks

E It depends

F Other (put in chat)

Which situation is the easiest for you to communicate in?

A Speaking with your healthcare team

B Collaborating in your place of work

C Interacting with family/loved ones

D Running errands or completing tasks

E It depends

F Other (put in chat)



Internal and External Factors that Impact Communication

- Goals
- Self-awareness (Emotions/Mood, Physical/Symptoms, Tone, Body Language)
- Active listening
- Preparation
- Environment
- Audience
- Time

Types of Difficult Conversations

Crucial Conversations – “a discussion between two or more people where the stakes are high, opinions may vary, and emotions are strong”

Crucial Confrontations – “face-to-face conversations in which someone is held accountable”

Although difficult conversations are **common**, can **occur across settings**, with **familiar people and unfamiliar people**, they are still experienced and **uncomfortable**.

Response Types

Self-awareness includes knowing how you (and others) tend to respond to difficult conversations

Types of Responses	Pros	Cons
Avoiding	Temporarily useful when emotions are high, or issue is minor.	Problem could grow.
Accommodating	Useful if need for harmony outweighs conflict, shows accountability if wrong.	Needs may not be met. Resentment may grow.
Competing	Emergent situations or important issues.	May be too forceful.
Compromising	Negotiation between folks with equivalent power. Balance of power.	Based on a set amount of resources.
Collaborating	Allows for finding a solution where all parties have needs met. Problem-solving. Creative.	No correct response.

Which response type do you use the most?

A Avoiding

B Accommodating

C Competing

D Compromising

E Collaborating

Resolving Conflict

- Conflict is inevitable
- Both positive and negative consequences may occur depending on how the conflict is managed.
- The results are likely to be better with active engagement rather than avoidance.
- People must be motivated to address conflict.
- Behavioral, cognitive, and emotional skills can be acquired.
- Emotional skills require self-awareness.
- The environment must be neutral and feel safe.



Preparing for Difficult Conversations

If it's a conversation that you can prepare for then prepare for it!

- Write down key points
- Make a list of your concerns, requests, or needs (not of the other person's faults)
- Make a list of solutions
- Choose a neutral location if possible
- Use relaxation techniques

Active Listening



Did you know...?

SILENT and **LISTEN** are anagrams.
They have the same letters!

Active listening involves actions to help understand the process, content, and feelings of another person

- **Non-verbal listening**

- Body language, nodding, eye contact (when appropriate), utterances (mhmm, uh uh, etc.)

- **Non-judgmental listening**

- Pausing
- Paraphrasing - *What I'm hearing you say is.....*

- **Empathy**

- *I can understand how the situation can be frustrating.....*
- *I know that this is not what you wanted to hear....*

Tips For Good Communication



- Practice "I" statements over "Them" or "You" statements
- Repeat back what the other person said before sharing your perspective
- Assume good or no intentions
- If the conversation can wait, ask for a good time to talk
- Give a preview of what you are about to say

SFS Method

Situation

Describe the situation

Feeling

Name the emotion

Solution

Present solutions or alternatives



SFS Method in Action



Healthcare Team

It's hard for me to remember everything and when you ask me if I have questions at the end of the appointment, I feel rushed. I'd like to talk about my questions at the beginning of the appointment so that I do not forget them.



SFS Method in Action



Family/loved ones

When you are watching TV while I am trying to describe my doctor's visit to you, I get distracted, and I feel like what I am saying is not important to you.

Can we set aside a time where we can give each other our full attention without distractions, and I can describe what happened at my visit?



Other Methods

VALUE

- Validate
- Ask open ended questions
- Listen
- Uncover Interest
- Explore Options

AMPP

- Ask questions
- Mirror/reflect
- Paraphrase
- Prime

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