

## Communication 101: Essential Skills to Support Caregivers

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### Presentation Objectives

- ▶ Role of the caregiver
- ▶ Learn how ED thoughts disrupt relationships
- ▶ Recognize communication barriers that impair trust
- ▶ Self care – Yours and your loved ones

## Role of Caregiver

- ▶ Support your loved one...
- ▶ Listen, listen, listen and discern the subliminal message
- ▶ Relinquish control to treatment team (stay in your lane)
- ▶ Education – learn facts and myth's of ED's
- ▶ Communicate effectively
- ▶ Re-nourish emotionally and physically
- ▶ Examine personal BI beliefs and behaviors
- ▶ Personal SELF-Care

## Support

- ▶ Basic human instinct to feel loved
- ▶ Need for connections – learn their “story.”
- ▶ Don't allow yourself (family) to be held hostage
- ▶ Need for respect
- ▶ Recognize loved one for accomplishments & successes

## Myths vs Facts

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ He can recover on his own</li> <li>▶ Only one way to communicate</li> <li>▶ I need/should force her to eat</li> <li>▶ I'll offer low-fat foods</li> <li>▶ She needs to understand what she is doing to me/us</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Treatment team</li> <li>▶ Personality characteristics influence communication</li> <li>▶ Resist the urge to give advice – instead listen</li> <li>▶ Suggest meal options</li> <li>▶ All foods are scary</li> <li>▶ Guilt &amp; shame lead to more isolation</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

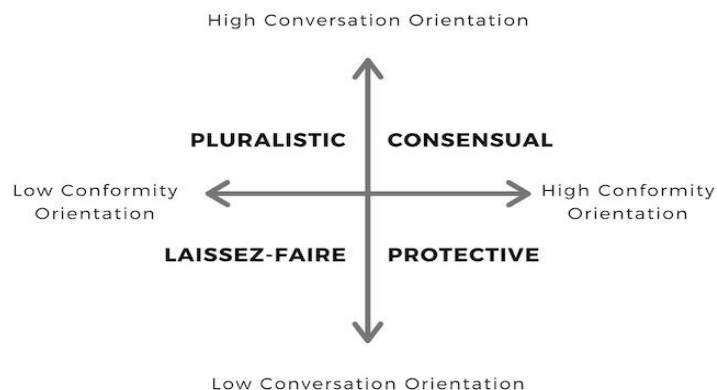
## Communication Styles

- ▶ Automatic assumptions – self blame; blame others
- ▶ Dichotomous (always, never, should, shouldn't, etc)
- ▶ Tone of voice (soft, gentle, harsh)
- ▶ Critical statements (subliminal, intentional)
- ▶ Achievement statements



"Your son did great, Mr. Jones. On the other hand, **YOU** need to pay attention in family worship."

## Family Style Communication Patterns



## Eating Disorder Filter Real/Perceived

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| ▶ You look really nice                        | ➡ | ▶ She thinks I'm fat,                                  |
| ▶ What would you like for dinner?             | ➡ | ▶ You can't eat today, you already ate too much.       |
| ▶ Do you think you should eat another cookie? | ➡ | ▶ You don't deserve to eat desserts.                   |
| ▶ Would you like to go for a walk?            | ➡ | ▶ She thinks I should exercise more.                   |
| ▶ You need to eat breakfast before school     | ➡ | ▶ She doesn't trust me.                                |
| ▶ You're doing great, keep up the good work.  | ➡ | ▶ You're eating too much, you must have gained weight. |

I'm supporting my daughter

My mom is sooo controlling

## Barriers to Connections (targets for the ED)



- ▶ Power struggle
- ▶ Don't feel safe
- ▶ Loss of identity
- ▶ Dysfunctional independence
- ▶ Oversimplifying
- ▶ Personalizing
- ▶ Break confidentiality

## Unhealthy Boundaries – Held Hostage by ED

- ▶ “you” statements (judgmental).
- ▶ “I’m eating in my room.”
- ▶ You can eat it, it’s low-fat, low calorie, low carb, etc.
- ▶ Diet talk during meals.
- ▶ Food group restrictions, ex: desserts.
- ▶ I’ll buy you a new dress if you just eat (bargaining).



## Healthy Boundaries – Don't negotiate with terrorists (ED)!

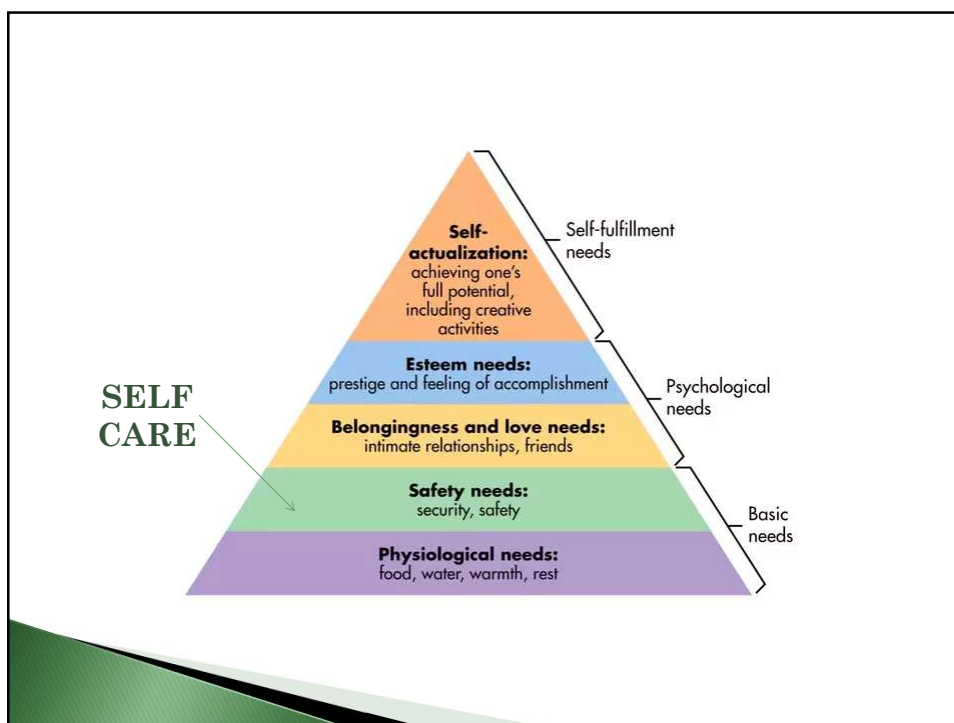


- ▶ “I” statements (non-judgment)
- ▶ Set aside time to discuss problems.
- ▶ Active listening.
- ▶ Encourage a safe experience
- ▶ Ask loved one to share their story.
- ▶ Keep conversation focus on whomever brought up the concern (the other side will come later).
- ▶ Emotional & Instrumental support.

“I understand ED controls your choices BUT I don't agree. How can I help with your discomfort.”

## Functional Communication that Invokes Trusting Relationships

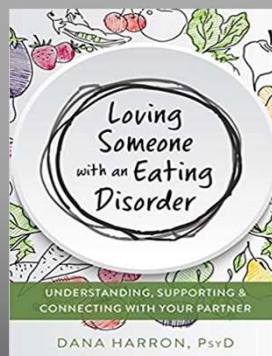
- ▶ Remove blame (self, other's) – looking for a “quick-fix exacerbates the problem, increase guilt & shame.
- ▶ Cultivate respect – present/past accomplishments, treatment challenges, courage, etc.
- ▶ C'words for support – calmness, communication, compassion, cooperation, consistency and coaching.
- ▶ Non-judgmental questions/statements – I would like to help, can you help me understand? Which of these two options would do you prefer for dinner? I'm here for you whenever you are ready to talk? Maybe this is best for you right now. I'm looking forward to spending time with you. I love your color combination. I'm proud of you. Do you think you are being too hard on yourself?
- ▶ Agree to disagree respectfully
- ▶ Meal time – distractions
- ▶ Authentic unconditional understanding





## Personal Examination Exercises

- ▶ Thinking About Your Relationship
- ▶ Identifying Your Feelings
- ▶ Honest Investigations
- ▶ Self-Care Assessment
- ▶ Seeds of Empathy
- ▶ Furthering Compassion
- ▶ Understand their story
- ▶ Understand their





## Resources

- ▶ NEDA – Parent & Caregivers Blog
- ▶ Helpline – Text, Call, Chat
- ▶ Parent toolbox
- ▶ NEDA connections
- ▶ F.E.A.S.T – Global support & Education for parents
- ▶ Educational handouts, books, articles
- ▶ Screening Tools & Assessments
- ▶ Helpline – Text, Call, Chat
- ▶ NEDA Student life support
- ▶ Social Media, School & Community.
- ▶ Educational handouts, books, articles
- ▶ Peer blogs healthy body image.

Parents, friends & family

Loved one with ED

## A Final Word --

- ▶ “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” —

Leo Buscaglia, author

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