

Empathy in Remote Supports

From Transactional Care to Transformational Connection



What is Empathy?

Empathy = Understand → Connect → Respond

It's not just a feeling — it's a skill we can practice every day.



What exactly is Empathy?

Empathy = Understand → Connect → Respond

It's not just a feeling — it's a skill we can practice every day.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another person, while maintaining a compassionate and non-judgmental attitude.

Caregivers with empathy can emotionally connect with those they care for, putting themselves in their shoes and trying to comprehend their perspective.

This understanding allows caregivers to respond to the needs and concerns of the individuals they care for with kindness, support, and sensitivity.



Some points of discussion:

- ▶ Discuss a time where you have a positive experience by a person who was caring for you or a loved one, what was said or done that made this experience memorable
- ▶ What are the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities
- ▶ Reflect on a time when you felt misunderstood or unsupported. How did that impact your well-being and overall experience?

Barriers that get in the way of empathetic service delivery and include:

- ▶ The time of day
- ▶ What happened before the interaction
- ▶ Personal life stress
- ▶ Emergency issues
- ▶ Work concerns and more

Being aware of these give us an opportunity to change how we respond, taking a minute to reflect and re-center can change the experience for you and those around you

Non-Verbal Communication

Most experts agree that over 90 percent of all communication is nonverbal.

When our nonverbal behaviors appear inconsistent with our words it can feel inconsistent and patronizing.



Non-Verbal Communication

When providing technology enabled supports there will be many times where we are providing support and the individual can only hear you.

This is not an excuse to lower your service delivery level or expectations of positive facial expressions

It has been shown that you can tell when someone is smiling even if you cant see their facial expressions.



Whether it is the first time meeting someone or the 1000th time someone has called in for support that week, your interactions with them will influence how they respond to your support and how much meaning your prompts will have.

When proper interactions are missing, people describe feeling alone, small, invisible, and like they're not important

First Impressions

How long do you think it takes to form a first impression based on facial expressions?

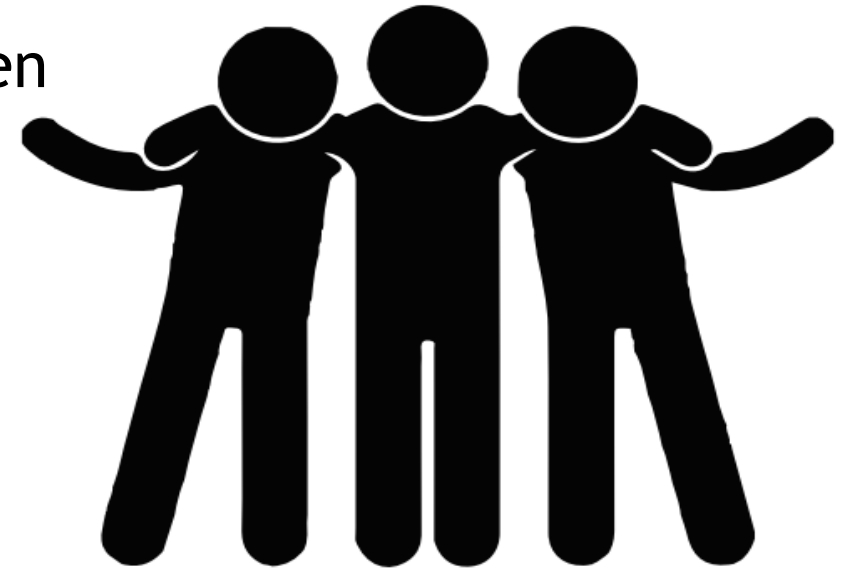
1/10 of a second

1/2 of a second

1 second

3 seconds

People tend to cherish their first impressions and, even with more time, tend to believe those impressions. A challenge people have is that sometimes our first impressions can be inaccurate.



Setting Expectations

Expectation setting is key to assisting someone, especially if not in the same physical space

Think of a time where someone was trying to assist you with a task and you didn't understand the steps you were about to take, or the end goal



Making the person feel like a priority

When providing tech-enabled supports there are many priorities all happening at once.

How can we ensure that the individual we are speaking with feels like a priority?



Active Listening

On Average, when someone is talking to us, what percent of what we hear do we remember?

1%-5%

10%-20%

25%-50%

50%-60%

Active Listening

While most people think they are good listeners, we really only remember less than half of what we hear

This is why it is important to be intentional in listening, and must always be focused in on

Active listening is more than just hearing what someone's saying, its actively trying to understand the other person

This requires us to be fully present with the other person



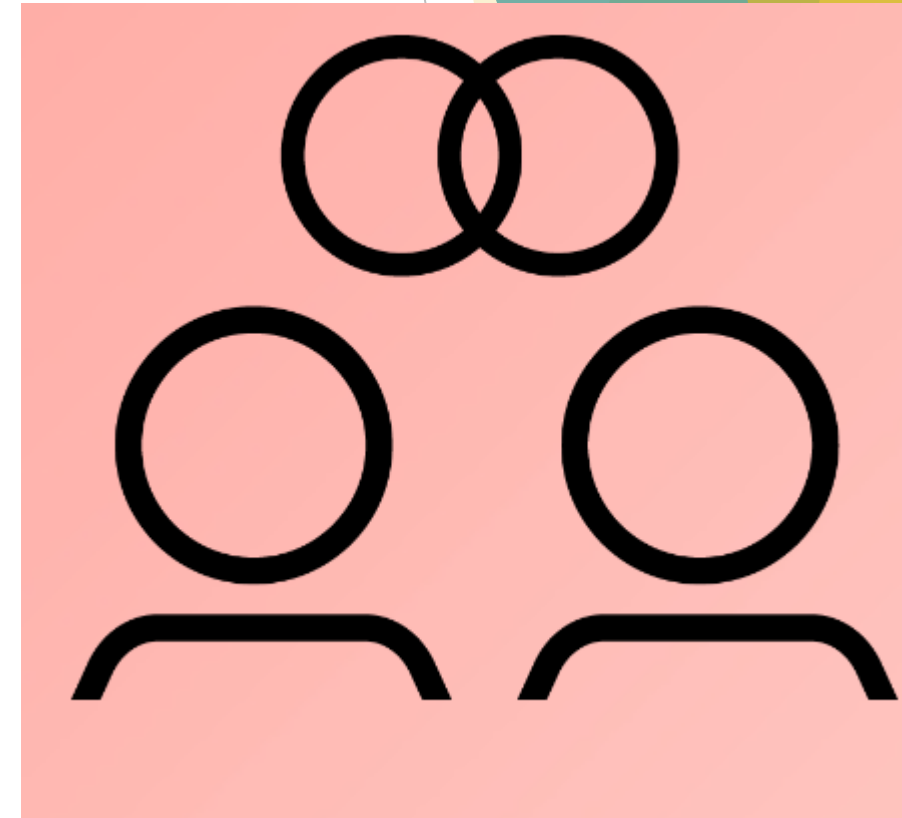
Active Listening

How to actively listen...

- ▶ Hear the entire story
- ▶ Attend to verbal and nonverbal cues
- ▶ Pay attention to what is said, the person's emotional cues, their body language and their tone
- ▶ Reflect back to them what was heard
- ▶ Allow for clarification

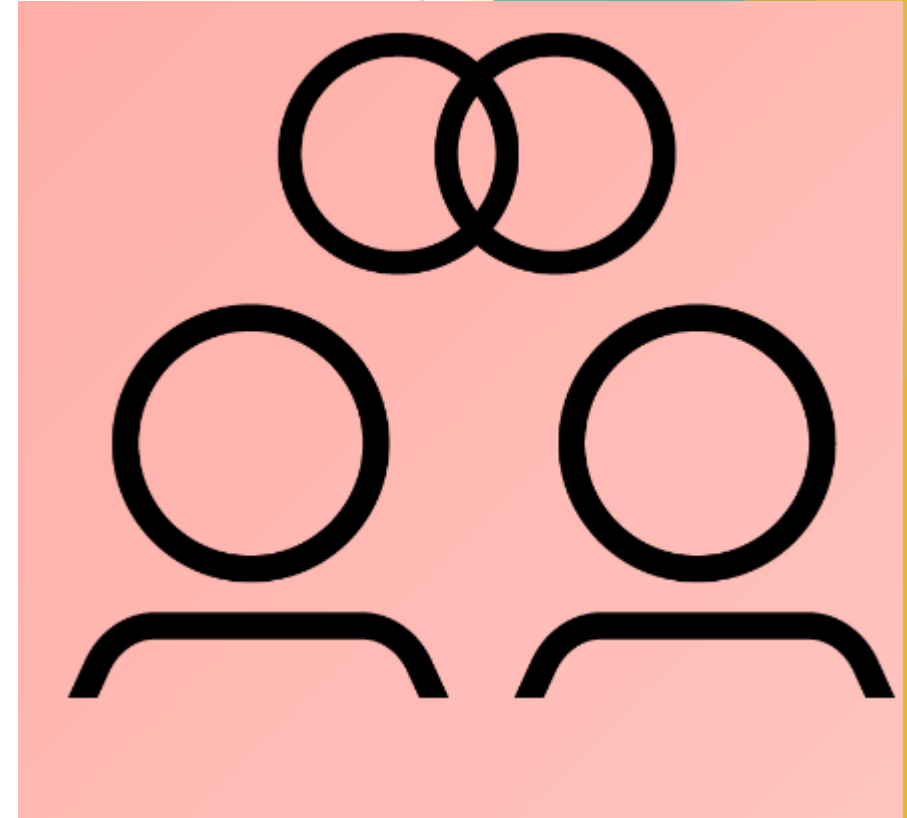
Rapport and Relationship Building

- ▶ Rapport is our ability to connect with others
- ▶ It seems natural but we tend to underestimate its importance
- ▶ It typically begins with something as simple as a warm and friendly greeting



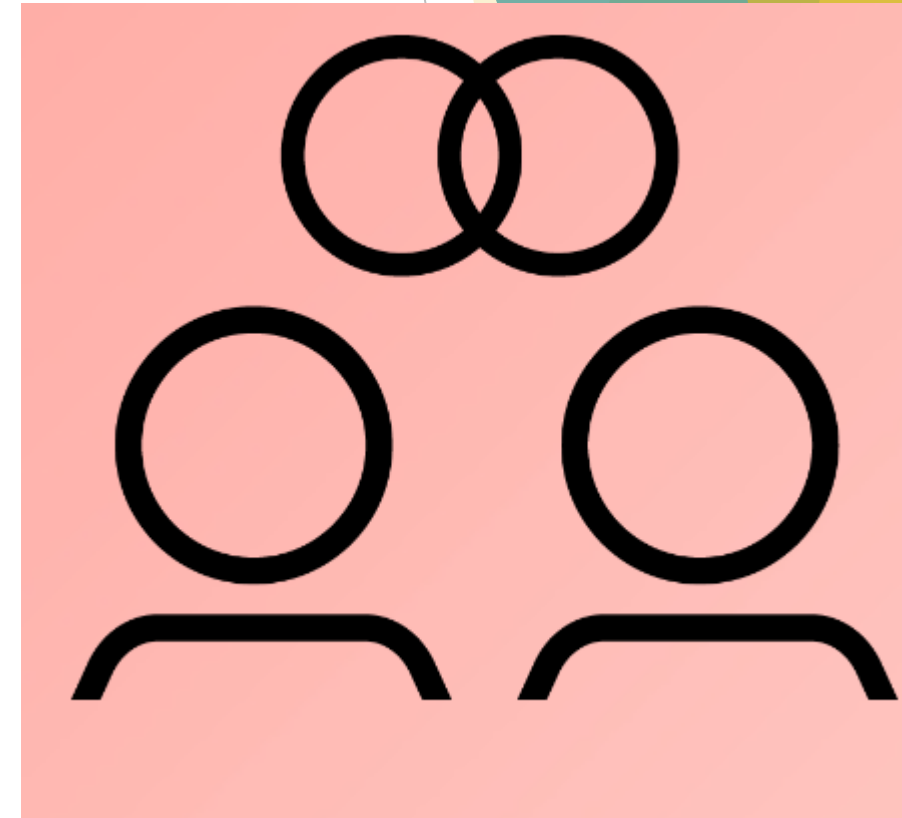
Rapport and Relationship Building

What are some ways you can think of to build rapport with those that we are providing support to?



Rapport and Relationship Building

- ▶ Remember, building rapport takes time and effort.
- ▶ Be patient, genuine, and consistent in your approach. Each person is unique, so adapt your approach to their individual needs and preferences.
- ▶ Building a strong rapport is an ongoing process that can significantly enhance the caregiving experience for both you and the person you care for.



Empathy in Tough Moments

The Cleveland Clinic developed the mnemonic S.A.V.E to help us remember some of the things to say in tough moments and those in between

It shows we truly understand the person we serve, and appreciate their experience

Support

Acknowledge

Validate

Emotion Name



Empathy in Tough Moments

We offer words of support or partnership to those we serve, it means we work together to solve the situation

Support

Acknowledge

Validate

Emotion Name



Empathy in Tough Moments

Acknowledge the person experience, really hear their perspective and state you hear them

Support

Acknowledge

Validate

Emotion Name



Empathy in Tough Moments

Let the person know their reaction is normal, and let them know that if you were in their situation you would likely feel the same way too

Support

Acknowledge

Validate

Emotion Name

Empathy in Tough Moments

Identify the emotion or let the person tell you how they feel, this lets the person know you care. You can tell someone it seems they are confused, scared or upset

Support

Acknowledge

Validate

Emotion Name

Expressing Gratitude

Research shows that expressing gratitude builds connections with people

Deepens existing relationships

Helps establish trust with each other

Grateful people tend to feel more positive emotions and feel more satisfied in life and exhibit more empathetic behaviors



Expressing Gratitude

Gratitude is shown by sincerely expressing what the support we provide means to us, and acknowledging the other person's effort

It can be expressed with sentences such as

“Thank you for allowing me to help complete the tasks at your job” or “I appreciate you letting me support your through the day to live independent”

Why is this an important step in our field?



Conclusion and Key Takeaways

Empathy is a skill that we need to hone throughout our lives

The more we use tech to deliver services the less natural empathy we will have, and the practice of empathy must be more deliberate

Empathy skills include the impressions we make, the way we listen and the way we communicate

The S.A.V.E acronym reminds us how to speak in hard times

Gratitude for those we support and the work we do closes out the empathy loop



Active Listening Practice

- ▶ Partner A shares for 2 minutes about a frustration.
- ▶ Partner B only paraphrases + validates.

- ▶ Switch roles and debrief:
 - ▶ • How did it feel different?
 - ▶ • What worked well?

Key Takeaways

3 Big Reminders:

1. First impressions matter — people remember how you make them feel.
2. Listening beats talking — empathy requires presence.
3. Gratitude closes the loop — acknowledge trust + effort.

