

Team Skills: Communication

The foundation of human interaction is communications. Communication is a fundamental skill that is integrated into team building and team success throughout any workplace. The groundwork communications skill building lies within the team, building trust and strengthening relationships. Effective communication skills empower team members to inspire and influence others to reach successful outcomes.

Messages that are too lengthy, disorganized, or contains errors, lead to misinterpretation. Use of poor verbal and body language also alter the message. There are a number of barriers to communication within teams leading to misunderstandings including such elements as: age, race, gender, cultural and education.

There's no question that effective communication with colleagues and team members is key to achieving results, reducing stress, and providing an environment of trust where team members feel free to ask for assistance, especially in areas which are stigmatized such as substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and mental health, among others. Necessary team skills in communications are critical to be able to encourage team members to be able to take the initiative with those having interpersonal issues to have respectful one-on-one discussions.

Communication can be improved in most workplaces, no matter the size or industry. One of the most pronounced and first attributes we find in the drug addicted person is a break-down in their communication. Having someone at your workplace to which a person who's thinking about drugs can talk to, could make the whole difference.

The first area in which communication breaks down is with family and friends because it is painful to keep disillusioning the people they love the most. Becoming a "drug addict" was never on the list of things to be, and it's impossible to hide from the addict the pain the parents or friends feel at seeing what they have become. So the communication starts the break down process.

Team members become fearful and mistrusting of their team as their substance abuse increases in duration, disease and symptomology. As users accept the label of "abuser", they begin to label their actions as reprehensible leading to behavioral changes such as social avoidance and depression. Because they are attempting to hide their activities, everyone becomes a potential threat, so they usually retreat into themselves. In the end, they even cut off communication from themselves. They may start surrounding themselves with other addicts who accept them, and end up cutting all communications with their friends and loved ones.

Drug detoxification rehabilitation and treatment programs have provided many individuals with successful communication skills leading to recovery success. It must be part of any successful drug addiction treatment facility to bring the ex-addict back into touch with their family, friends and coworkers. Past users must learn to intermingle with their team within the workplace without the fear of stigma and with positive attitude toward their continued recovery. Team members must begin to trust the recovering person with time, work, and honest, open communications.