

Therapeutic communication

- ✓ **Do** — active listening, open-ended questions, silence, reflection, validation, clarification, summarizing, teach-back, sitting at eye level
- ✓ **Don't** — false reassurance (“you’ll be fine”), advice (“if I were you”), **“why” questions** (accusatory), closed questions when exploration is needed, changing the subject, clichés (“stay positive”), interpreting instead of clarifying, “I know exactly how you feel”
- ✓ **Validate, don't reassure.** Support insight rather than offering solutions
- ✓ **Thought disorders** — concrete, literal language, one instruction at a time, no metaphors. **Anxious clients** — short simple sentences. **Children** — age-appropriate words and limited choices
- ✓ **Use certified interpreters, never family members.** Assess cultural preferences (eye contact, touch, personal space, silence) — never assume them

Coping and stress

- ✓ **Adaptive** — problem-solving, seeking support, assertive communication, exercise, journaling, relaxation, humor, time management
- ✓ **Maladaptive** — avoidance or withdrawal, substance misuse, aggression or blaming, denial of risk, impulsive spending or sex, over- or under-eating, compulsions, **self-harm**
- ✓ **Assess safety first** with maladaptive coping — self-harm, withdrawal, aggression. Then explore the feeling underneath; never confront or shame
- ✓ **Anger is not the problem to fix first** — assess safety and the emotion behind it before redirecting

Counseling and behavior change

- ✓ **Motivational interviewing** is a correct answer far more often than advice is: **ask** open-ended questions, **affirm** strengths, **reflect** back what you heard, **summarize**
- ✓ **Stages of change** — pre-contemplation → contemplation → preparation → action → maintenance. **Meet clients where they are**, not where you want them to be
- ✓ **Never moralize or lecture.** “You need to stop drinking immediately” is always the wrong option
- ✓ **Harm reduction is legitimate care** — naloxone for opioid users, condoms even when abstinence wasn't chosen, designated drivers
- ✓ **Assess before you teach, and never teach during a crisis, acute mania, or panic**