

# *You Might Be Better Than You Think*

## *How to Get Objective Feedback on Your Ability to Communicate to Motivate*

For Counselors



Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, WIC Program, Lansing, MI  
[www.michigan.gov/wic](http://www.michigan.gov/wic)

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## Preparing for CCS Skills Observation and Feedback

### **Counselor Tips:**

- Learning a new skill is a journey which requires lots of focused practice.
- CCS skill use improves your effectiveness in helping clients to change behaviors.
- Remind yourself: if an error is made, a lesson is learned; when it works, build on it for future sessions.
- Ask permission of the client before having someone observe. Explain that you want to strengthen your counseling skills and have asked someone to observe.
- After the session, thank the client for allowing you to be observed.

### **Observer Tips:**

- Ask permission of the counselor and client prior to the observation, explaining that you will just be watching and taking notes.
- Avoid intervening during the appointment.
- After the session, thank the client and counselor for allowing you to observe them.
- Offer supportive feedback to the counselor in a private setting using CCS skills, such as affirmations and/or open-ended questions.

# You Might Be Better Than You Think

## Getting Started

### Create a Warm Environment

- ◇ Be yourself.
- ◇ Greet the client and explain what will happen during your time together.
- ◇ When culturally appropriate, make eye contact.
- ◇ Be aware of your body language and your tone, and theirs.

### Give Yourself a Break

- ◇ It's not all or nothing. Use the skills when it feels appropriate, but know that the more you practice, the more comfortable you will be.
- ◇ There is no right or wrong. Attempting to listen more deeply and to clarify what you heard will be appreciated.
- ◇ You don't have to fix anything. The client holds the power to make the decision to change or not. You are available to be their resource for evidence based information and education as well as an empathetic and understanding professional.

### When Clients Are Quiet It Isn't a Rejection

- ◇ Try being ok with the silence.
- ◇ Lower your tone and be gentler.
- ◇ Acknowledge what you are seeing.
- ◇ *You are very quiet today.*
- ◇ *It doesn't seem like you feel like talking.*
- ◇ *What are you thinking?*



## Open Ended Questions

- ◇ Cannot easily be answered yes or no.
- ◇ Will generate more information with fewer questions.
- ◇ As a rule, avoid, “Why?”

### Examples Might Be:

*To what extent...*

*When, if ever..... (gives the client a way out)*

*How often, if at all. (gives the client a way out)*

*What, if any..... (gives the client a way out)*

*How did \_\_\_\_ work for you?*

*What has worked for you in the past?*

*Tell me (about meals at your house, what would happen if you took the bottle away, what would happen if you offered a vegetable as a snack etc.) ...*

*What is a typical day with (meals and snacks, activity, screen time, etc.) ...*

*Help me understand (what you would like to be different, how you manage to...etc.) How would you begin?*

*What would you need to try?*

*What would be different if you ..... (ate less fast food, breastfeed, lost some weight etc.)*



## Reflections

- ◇ Reflections are statements. Use a down turn.
- ◇ Simply restate what was said, or make a statement about what you believe was implied.
- ◇ Don't be afraid to use feeling words (mad, sad, confused, happy, hurt, relieved...)
- ◇ Shorter is better.

### Starters for Simple Reflections

*Sounds like...*

*I think you're saying...*

*I heard you say...*

*You want to...*

*You wish...*

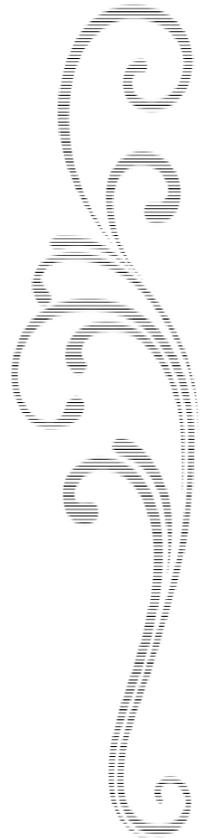
*I'm understanding that...*

*You're saying that...*

*You're feeling\_\_\_\_\_.*

*You're\_\_\_\_\_.*

*You need\_\_\_\_\_.*



## **Affirmations**

- ◇ Affirmations help clients become aware of their strengths, efforts or successes.
- ◇ Affirmations are not praise. Refrain from using judging words such as good, great, awesome, amazing.
- ◇ It is ok to affirm any effort toward the desired behavior, even if client was not fully successful.

### **Possible Affirmations**

*You keep trying.*

*You're (creative, determined, understanding, flexible, strong, capable, hardworking...) You don't give up.*

*You're going to find a way.*

*You will figure this out.*

*You've been successful before.*

*You know what you need.*

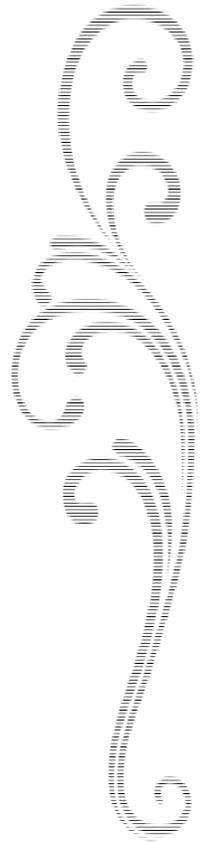
*You do the best you can.*

*You're proud of yourself.*

*You surprised yourself.*

*You handled that.*

*It was hard, but you got through it.*



## Asking Permission to Share

- ◇ Before jumping in with education or advice, ask permission to share.
- ◇ This focuses the client on the topic and gives them the option to decline or to make a request for information that they feel is more pertinent.

### Suggestions for Asking Permission

*Would you be interested in hearing what other WIC moms have tried?*

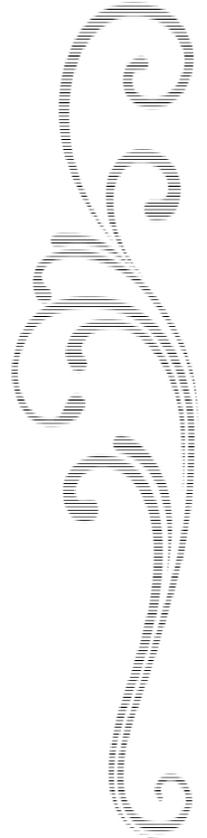
*Would you be interested in learning what we have discovered about \_\_\_\_\_?*

*I'm thinking that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are both going on with your child.*

*Would you be interested in some tips for handling either (or both) of these issues?*

*May I share what I have learned about \_\_\_\_\_?*

*What if anything would you like to know about \_\_\_\_\_?*



### Tracking Your Goals and Progress

Building CCS skills doesn't happen overnight. It is a process learned one step at a time with focused effort. Setting goals and receiving feedback challenges you to strengthen your skills. Use the CCS Skills: Feedback Session Tally form for feedback sessions with a mentor or supportive co-worker. To track CCS skill development over time, use the CCS Skill: Feedback Session Tracking form.

Below is a sample of a couple feedback sessions recorded on a Feedback Session Tally form. Tally marks represent each time the observer noted a CCS skill used during a counseling session.

### CCS Skills: Feedback Session Tally

*Sample*

Date: __/__/17__	Open Ended Questions	Reflections	Affirmations	Permission to Share
<b>Goal for This Session</b>	11111 111	11111	111	1
<i>My goal is to do at least four reflections.</i>				
<b>Successes or Missed Opportunities</b>				
<i>You met your goal of four reflections! You also asked lots of open ended questions and several affirmations, too. The client appeared open to your suggestions when you asked permission to share another mom's story.</i>				
Date: __/__/17__	Open Ended Questions	Reflections	Affirmations	Permission to Share
<b>Goal for This Session</b>	11111 1111	111111	111	11
<i>My goal is to do four affirmations</i>				
<b>Successes or Missed Opportunities</b>				
<i>You did three affirmations, almost made your goal. You provided lots of open ended questions and four reflections. There were a couple of times when you asked open ended questions and perhaps could have made affirmations.</i>				

## CCS Skills: Feedback Session Tally

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: _____	Open Ended Questions	Reflections	Affirmations	Permission to Share
Goal for This Session				
<b>Successes or Missed Opportunities</b>				
Date: _____	Open Ended Questions	Reflections	Affirmations	Permission to Share
Goal for This Session				
<b>Successes or Missed Opportunities</b>				

# CCS Skills: Feedback Session Tracking

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Feedback Session</b>  Date: _____	<b>Open Ended Questions</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____	<b>Reflections</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____	<b>Affirmations</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____	<b>Permission to Share</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____
<b>Feedback Session</b>  Date: _____	<b>Open Ended Questions</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____	<b>Reflections</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____	<b>Affirmations</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____	<b>Permission to Share</b> Desired/ Achieved _____/_____
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