

## 3 Learning tools for participants: Tasks; endline

Please also review the *introduction to using the self-observation and reflection tasks* in Part B, and revisit and discuss these themes in the first meeting with participants in Phase 3.

It is especially important to review and re-emphasize how and why to do “Observation In Action” (which includes the emotional reactions in the interaction), and how and why to “Reflect On Action”. Ask participants for experiences with using these methods, and ask about challenges they still have. Discuss and share good practices participants have discovered from phase 1.

### 3.1 Overview of tasks in Phase 3: Skills into Action

**Pack 4:** 1. Sharing information from the course  
2. Observing reactions from colleagues  
3. Giving constructive feedback  
4. Natural ways to use your skills, and barriers (Throughout the period)

**Pack 5:** 5. Patterns of communicating with your supervisor  
6. Taking care of safety; effects on communication  
7. Showing respect for patients’ emotions, and the effects of this on you  
8. Taking care of your own emotions

**Pack 6:** 9. Best practice examples  
10. Special task: Insights on and questions about research  
11. Dealing with patients’ emotions – and the effect of this on you: Further reflections on changing the interaction with the patient

#### Endline questionnaire

**Special task:** Refresher meeting: Automatic reactions – Reflecting on change

### 3.2 Observation and reflection tasks Phase 3: Pack 4 (tasks 1-4)

**Note:** Please include an introduction to the new sets of tasks, with a personal message from the trainers to the participants, and some general comments on continuing with the tasks. Our version of this introduction is below.

#### 3.2.1 *Introducing the new tasks*

It was very good to meet you and work with you all last week. All the trainers have enjoyed getting to know you, and to experience your healthy curiosity and observe your learning.

We trust you have settled well back into your jobs after a week of intensive learning, and are finding ways to practice your communication skills – and also take care of your emotions. It is during this

time you will decide how much of what you learnt will become part of your daily routines, and will be turned into new communication patterns with a different effect on colleagues and patients.

As agreed, we are giving you some new tasks to help your learning process further, and to keep reflecting on what you do and how it works. Please keep notes, and we would like to hear from you:

***Once per month, we would like to receive one reflection on your practice, or an example of a situation you are handling well.*** If you would like to send us more reflections and examples, please do so. You decide how much work you would like to put into this process. We are very interested to read your reflections, and as you know – we use them actively to plan the follow-up course.

Throughout the practice period, please pay attention to how you take your new awareness, your skills and your motivation to do things differently, with you into your routines. Where do you find opportunities to use your new skills, and which skills does it feel “natural” to practice? Are there skills you hesitate to use, for any reason(s)? Does it feel awkward to practice some of the skills? If so - how, and why?

Take a moment to reflect on these questions every day throughout the practice period, to monitor your own changes, and take a few notes. If there is a situation you handle differently – please note down what happens, what you do, what the effect is, and any reflections you have. It is also useful to note situations you still have problems with, and let us know about these, so we can plan to handle these during the follow-up course.

It does not matter in which sequence you do the tasks in this pack, as long as you do ***one task per week***. We include a general task (Task 4), which means you can report on “anything” that happens which makes you use your new skills. This is an invitation to share something significant, something that makes you acknowledge you are communicating in a different way (rather than “classical observation”). You can report on these kinds of incidences throughout the practice period.

Most of your managers (or Heads of Department, HOD) are aware of the course, but it is still important that you give them information about what you have learnt so far, and about the continuation of the process. This will enable them to support you practicing your new skills.

***Please make it your priority to inform your HOD.*** Below are suggestions for what you can do, and how to observe and reflect on effects of these methods.

With these tasks, we are also distributing an article we trust will inspire further reflections. You will get another article with the next set of tasks. We trust that you will hand in your tasks, or send them in an email to (the trainer) by the required date and save her from “chasing” you! ***1<sup>st</sup> deadline: (date)***  
***We also attach your many good ideas for how to take care of your emotions!***

***Do you have suggestions for what to observe? Please send us a note!***

### ***3.2.2 Observation Task 1: Sharing information from the course***

***Note: Please include the header in all tasks, to credit the author and acknowledge source***

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Communication Awareness Tools Series – Created by Ane Haaland

*Observation tasks: Sharing information, observing reactions, giving constructive feedback*

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## Task 1: Sharing information from the course

**Note:** Please read task 2 on sharing information with your colleagues (below) as well, and decide when to use task 1, and when to use task 2. You can use them as opportunity arises, and do them both within 2-3 weeks.

There are many situations where giving feedback is useful – and depending on the situation and your goal, you can choose different methods. The first task for this week will be to **explore methods for sharing info from the course process** with colleagues and/or HODs.

An important question to ask is: **What do you want to achieve? What is your aim?** Your aim determines your method. For example, if you want them to be motivated to go to the next course, you need to share something which makes them **feel positively** about learning in the course. Pure info about the contents would not achieve this, but a positive example of how you yourself have learnt, might inspire them. Another example – if your HOD and colleagues are wondering if the process is useful, your aim could be to show usefulness by giving an overview of the contents of and methods used in the course, linking it to research (if appropriate), and then sharing an example of what you do differently as a result of the course. If possible – show them how you now communicate differently by **demonstrating** it to them (“Show, don’t tell”). This method would address both **general** usefulness (“macro view”), and **personal** usefulness (“micro view”).

### **Remember not to overload – let them ask, don’t “force feed”!!**

#### **What to share, and how**

During the course (and the preparation period), we dealt with a number of different topics. How do you choose what is important to share, and how much? There is no fixed answer to this, but a few guidelines may be useful when you explore (with awareness) what works best:

- ✓ **Share something which is important to you** – something you learnt, which you have found useful in your work, something which has made a difference. If you can link this to a recent situation at work – preferably one some of them have observed – it will make even more sense to them (they will see the relevance to their own work).
- ✓ **Telling a story/giving an example** from your own learning is (usually) a non-threatening method which invites listeners to reflect, and ask questions. If you share an example of what you learnt during the observation period (also mistakes you made – let them “laugh at you”), it might make them interested to also start observing themselves, e.g. on how they listen.
- ✓ **Share an overview of the topics in the course** (attached, for easy ref) if colleagues are asking for this, or if you are asked to tell about “what did you all do”. After an overview, you can ask colleagues what they want to hear more about, and share examples and stories (remember what made YOU learn – probably role-plays and practice of skills?)
- ✓ **Invite them to ask:** They have probably observed you doing things differently. Ask if they would be interested for you to share something, and let them define what it should be. Have a couple of recent examples ready to share if no one comes up with a question right away.
- ✓ **Use empathy to decide what to share:** How do your colleagues feel? Are they relaxed? Sad? Overwhelmed? Curious? Choose a topic which is appropriate for the situation, and relevant to your colleagues. Be sure to focus on “this is what I am doing now, because...”, rather than “This is what you should do...”
- ✓ **What to avoid:** Moralizing, and judging. They do not have the insights you have, and will probably make many mistakes you no longer make (if you ever did!). Be careful not to judge – but rather state, or better – show by being an example – how you solve or deal with different situations now. Invite them to join you, and to ask questions, if they like.

**When to share, and where?**

You are already doing a lot of sharing, and have probably found many good situations to share. Both formal and informal situations can be useful – basically, you have to be an opportunist and take the chance whenever you see one.

- ✓ If you have not already done so, it might be useful to ask the HOD for a (brief) formal meeting, to let the HOD take charge and “legalize” talking about the course, and encourage your colleagues to discuss with you. In such a meeting, it could be useful to give an overview of what you did in the observation period, plus course contents, and then share a couple of examples of what you have found useful in your work. In such a meeting – use the methods from the course: Ask a question, and ask them to discuss with each other before giving answers. This will encourage them to be more involved, and reflect more.
- ✓ **Continue in informal settings:** After such a meeting, informal situations might be the most useful. Ask what your colleagues would like you to share.

A good guideline might be: ***Be an ambassador – not a missionary!***

***TASK: Please make notes about what methods you use to share information, and how it works. Choose an example to describe the effect of what you do, on the other person.***

**3.2.3 Observation Task 2: Observing the reactions of your colleagues**

How do your colleagues react to you after the course? Are you met with ***friendly curiosity*** (“so you have learnt new skills? What have you learnt? Tell me/show me/share a story”)? Or ***scepticism*** (“new methods? How do you know they work? These patients are simply difficult, no methods will help”)? Or ***jealousy, or judgement, or sarcasm*** (“who are you to know so much better?”) – maybe because your colleague has had to cover for you and do extra work while you were away? Or – any other reaction. (Note: There were many such reactions to participants from the first courses – there may be fewer now, as more people are informed about the course.)

All these reactions are natural, and to be expected. The question is – how do you handle them? Do you get your antennae out and take a step back, or do you protect yourself in the “old” way? Below are some possible reactions you may find yourself using (to scepticism/ judgement/ hostility/ sarcasm). The first ones are “automatic emotional reactions”; the last ones are where you start to use your emotional competence:

- **Attack back**, respond with same “tone”
- **Judge** your colleague for being “unfair”
- **Withdraw, leave** (after showing nonverbally what you feel/mean?)
- **Feel hurt**, but don’t know what to do (what ***do*** you do?)
- **Take a step back** – recognize, acknowledge and then suspend/set aside your emotional reaction, and act constructively
- **Look for the reason behind the reaction** (how do you find out?)
- Any other reaction?

Please note what you do, and what the effect is of your action, on your colleague.

Also – what is the effect on you? Do you carry resentment with you, and plan to get back on him/her?

Or have you seen/understood/talked about the feelings behind the action, and “cleared the air”?

If you carry any feelings with you – how have you taken care of them? Reflect on what you do well, and what you still need to learn more about. You can also share a situation where you met positive interest from your colleague, and describe what happened and how you felt.

*NOTE: If colleagues are sarcastic to you, they are trying to put you down, to make you “smaller” than them (often without being conscious that this is what they do). They will only succeed, if you agree to be “made smaller”. The best way to meet sarcasm, is to take a step back and be neutral – don’t let it “get to you”. Behind sarcasm is often insecurity.*

*Share an example of how you handled sarcasm from a colleague.*

### **3.2.4 Observation Task 3: Giving constructive feedback to a colleague**

It may be very tempting (and an automatic emotional reaction) to want to tell your colleagues they should practice communication skills the way you do it... and to judge them when they don't. We are sure you don't fall into this trap, but rather take a step back to decide what you can do to help them learn! Your colleagues will probably feel a mixture of curiosity, envy, admiration and ...? – about your new skills. Your best chance to motivate them to learn is by **showing them** (without showing off!) **your new skills in natural situations**, let them observe, and discuss/invite them to ask questions. Demonstrate, if appropriate, using the “good situation/skills”.

If you give them direct (but constructive) feedback on a situation you have observed them using “bad” methods, be very careful – this can easily be felt like “*you are now the expert telling others what to do*”, and colleagues would likely resent it. (*It would also be unfair – as they have not learnt the skills yet*). If a colleague **invites** you to observe her/him, then please give feedback (in private), following the rules from the course (positive first, then specific/ constructive). Let your colleagues know that you are happy to give them feedback, but let them take the initiative.

Please observe and reflect on what works and what you still need to improve regarding how you give constructive feedback, adjust your methods as you learn, and discuss how use these skills, with your colleagues. Share one example with us of how you have shared information or given feedback.

**Deadline: (date)**

### **3.2.5 Observation Task 4: Natural ways to use your skills, and barriers**

**NB This task can be used throughout the period of Phase 3**

How are you doing with your changes – which new skills are becoming “natural” to you? Are there skills you are finding pleasure in using, because of how it makes the other person feel, or how it makes you feel, or – the results it brings, or – all of the above??

Are there skills you hesitate to use, for any reason(s)? Does it feel awkward to practice some of the skills? If so- how, and why?

You can report on “anything” that happens which makes you use your new skills, and the effects these have on the other person(s), and on you. This is an invitation to share something significant, something that makes you acknowledge you are communicating in a different way (rather than “classical observation”).

**You can report and reflect on these kinds of incidences throughout the practice period.**

**Note learning needs continuously:** It is also useful to note situations and skills you still have problems with, and let us know about these, so we can plan to handle these during the follow-up course.

**NOTE:** *The next pack will be on communicating with your supervisors. You could start paying a bit of attention to this when you have time and opportunity.*

**Have fun!** And please make notes on your observations. *Questions, comments, examples to: (..)*