

STATEMENTS THAT EXPRESS EMPATHY

- “Tell me more about that.”
- “How does that make you feel?”
- “It seems hard for you to talk about this.”
- “You sound sad, upset, angry (insert correct emotion).”
- “It sounds like you feel frustrated with your progress.”

space, and touching. What are the beliefs regarding male and female roles and of disability in the culture? The best way to learn about another culture is to ask your client or a family member. Usually, they are pleased that you have asked and are willing to educate you.

You will be communicating with many individuals, from your supervisor to family members to other members of the health care team. Each interaction may require a different approach and different style of communication. Most problems can be solved with good communication, but will escalate with poor communication.

INITIATIVE AND FLEXIBILITY

As academic fieldwork coordinators, we are frequently told by clinical supervisors of both level I and II students that the traits of initiative and flexibility in students are the skills that mattered most to them. A student's academic performance did not matter because the knowledge could be taught, but the ability to be flexible and take initiative in today's work environment was essential to successful fieldwork, and these traits are not easily taught.

Taking initiative on fieldwork means not waiting for your supervisor to tell you what to do. It means using textbooks, journals, and new resources to look up diagnoses, medical terms, medications, and treatment ideas and not relying on others for their suggestions. It means keeping yourself busy if you have an empty block of time in your schedule by seeing if the clinic or work area needs to be cleaned up, observing another therapist doing a treatment, or making sure your paperwork is up-to-date. For many students, taking initiative can be difficult, as students often feel they do not know enough to take initiative and so they wait to be told to do something. As a student, you need to have confidence in yourself and to be motivated from inside yourself, not from others. It is preferable to ask

permission to clean up the clinic or research a treatment idea or diagnosis. If it is not okay, you will be told that. By letting your supervisor know you are thinking of these things, he or she will see that you are willing to do things without being told.

Flexibility is such an important trait in today's work place. Whether you are in a school, community, or institutional setting, events will happen that will require you to alter your schedule. Your client might be having a test done, be ill, or be on a field trip when you had planned to see him or her. Your supervisor may be out or may have forgotten you were coming that day (this happens for level I fieldwork more often than level II). If you are the type of person who has always liked to make a schedule and stick to it, then being flexible may be a problem for you on your internship or fieldwork. In life, things do not always go as we planned, and this occurs in fieldwork as well. You need to be prepared to change your plans based on your supervisor's, client's, or facility's needs and not to be angry about having to do this. Often, just knowing to expect schedules to change can help someone who is very organized cope with this issue.

Being flexible and having initiative both require good judgment and clinical reasoning abilities. Clinical reasoning skills are taught during your academic program, and you used them in different situations, perhaps in case studies or during level I fieldwork experiences. Clinical reasoning is a skill that you will develop throughout your career as an occupational therapy practitioner. As you complete level I fieldwork and then move on to level II fieldwork, you will feel that you do not have the knowledge base with which to make decisions. This is an uncomfortable feeling. However, with practice comes the ability to use knowledge gained from previous experiences. This is the development of clinical reasoning. It is important to realize that this is a process. Use your initiative to look up information, review previous client treatment plans, and make decisions based on this information. Using good judgment in this matter is key.