Relationship Science Online

Therapeutic Approaches: Communication Skills

Therapeutic Approaches

- **Halford (2011) notes a series of guidelines for communication and building communication skills**
- **These skills relate to both the speaker and listener**
- **Speaker Skills:**
  - Describe specifics. Provide clear and concrete descriptions of behaviors or situations
  - Express positives. Clearly express your thoughts and feelings about the positive aspects of a situation or your partner's behavior, even if things seem mostly negative
  - Assert negatives. Without being aggressive or attacking, say directly what you dislike or want to see change
  - Self-disclose feelings. Share your thoughts and feelings with your partner even if it feels difficult

Therapeutic Approaches

- **Listener Skills**
  - Attend. Focus your attention on your partner when he or she is speaking. This includes having eye contact, facing your partner, and removing distractions (e.g., put down the newspaper, switch off the television).
  - Encourage. This involves saying things like "Oh," "Go on," or "I see" so your partner knows you're interested in what he or she is saying.
  - Summarise content. State back to your partner in your own words the key points of what he or she has just said.
  - Paraphrase feelings. Summarise in words the emotion your partner is expressing. Often his or her emotion will not be said in words, but will be reflected in how he or she says things, and how he or she looks.
  - Ask questions. Ask open-ended questions that encourage your partner to open his or her up ideas.
  - Hear your partner out. Let your partner finish speaking, consider what he or she said, and avoid immediately disagreeing or defending yourself. Put your own opinion on hold until later.

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