



Communication (Behaviour) Policy

The Centre for Ecotherapy is an equal opportunity ecotherapy and 'education-in-the-outdoors' provider. We believe that working outside can increase confidence, self esteem, skills and knowledge in a natural and self-determined way.

Learners are encouraged, supported and empowered to develop personal understanding and autonomy while participating in activities for individuals and groups during their attendance at the Centre.

To ensure that everyone who takes part in the Centre's activities has equal opportunity to learn and grow, we have developed an ethos towards positive and negative 'behaviour' that might affect individuals' experiences.

The Centre for Ecotherapy considers 'behaviour' of any kind to be a person's individual means of communication. **Communication can be positive and healthy but at times, for many reasons, communication can become difficult, unhealthy and even dangerous.** The Centre's Communication (Behaviour) Policy is the means by which we consider and deal with those situations.

General Statement of Aims

First and foremost is our commitment to the recognition that for individual learning and growth to occur **everyone at the Centre needs to feel safe and secure.** To this end, we are committed to ensuring that every member of the Centre - staff, volunteers, participants and visitors alike - verbally and physically communicates in a responsible and acceptable manner and demonstrates:

- Care, courtesy and respect for others, regardless of whether they are staff, volunteers, participants or visitors
- Care and respect for each other's property and belongings
- Care and respect for the Centre's equipment, facilities and environment as well as the wider environment
- Care and mutual respect for the whole community.

We will achieve these aims by using the following guidelines and procedures.

- The Health and Safety policy including Risk Assessments of site and equipment.
- the Equal Opportunities policy
- the Code of Conduct (see Appendix)
- the Safeguarding (Vulnerable Adults AND Children and Young People) policies
- the Safe Use of Fires policy
- the Emergency Action Plan
- Up-to-date First Aid certificates, Food Hygiene certificates (when necessary), and DBS checks
- Centre staff will keep all equipment in good working order and all facilities in acceptable conditions.

Communication between staff, volunteers, participants and visitors.

If everyone who works or attends the Centre values themselves and others around them, our learning environment will be open and nurturing. At times however one person's needs may conflict with another person's needs. Communication between people at this time may become difficult and those people may need help in order to diffuse the situation and to become aware of where the conflict or mis-understanding may have occurred.

It is the Centre's understanding that individuals have the right to participate or not participate in the activities provided. Participation or non-participation is equally valued so long as communication around the subject is positive and inclusive. Eg. A person has the right to decline from participating but does not have the right to disrupt or prevent other people's participation.

In the event of communication becoming problematic the Centre's staff will follow **set procedures** so as to return the individual or group and/or the session to acceptable forms of communication.

Procedures:

1. Attempt to diffuse situation, including separating individuals if necessary. (where possible a member of staff should attend to each individual)
2. Listen, without judgement, to each party (Use Helping Protocol, see Appendix)
3. Ascertain if any other influences are involved
4. Once calm, support individuals to listen and hear each other's concerns
5. Support individuals to attempt reconciliation with mediation/assistance if necessary.
6. In the event that reconciliation is not forthcoming, separate individuals if necessary in order to continue activity
7. i) In situations involving Children and Young People, if reconciliation is not possible during the session, inform educational establishment/parents/carers (agreed at initiation of programme) of situation and actions taken.

- ii) In situations involving adults, vulnerable or otherwise, discuss with all parties how might the situation be resolved so as to enable continuation of group working.
- 8. Continue communication with adult individuals/educational establishment/parents/carers as regards to following sessions, if relevant.
- 9. Keep record of situation and actions/resolution for Centre

Written and approved by: Bayley and Dempster.
The Centre for Ecotherapy, January 2020

Appendix

1. Helping Protocol (for staff):

1. **Be Mindful of Your Own Reaction.**

A vital component of managing difficult behavior is knowing that your behaviour affects the behaviour of others. What you say or do in response to an individual's behaviour affects whether the behaviour escalates or stops. When you're aware of this factor, and when you're equipped and empowered with other effective and respectful behaviour management strategies, you're better able to de-escalate difficult behaviour and help individuals regain control and make positive choices.

2. **Maintain Rational Detachment.**

When you're rationally detached, you maintain control by not taking negative comments or actions personally. Without this key ability, team members may react instinctively or defensively, which will only escalate a situation. Equipped with this skill, you're better able to defuse challenging behaviour and encourage positive behavior.

3. **Be Attentive.**

When people feel ignored, marginalized, or not cared for, they often act out. An effective way to counter a person's anxiety is to validate her feelings. Pay attention to what she says. Give her plenty of personal space. Show her through your facial expressions and body language that you're listening, and you can take away her reasons for being upset—and give her a reason to regain control.

4. **Use Positive Self-Talk.**

Remind yourself that when you're the target of an outburst or a negative situation, you're rarely the cause of the behaviour. And just as thinking, "I can't deal with this" might cause you to react one way, telling yourself, "I know what to do" will cause a more productive response.

5. **Recognize Your Limits.**

Being a professional doesn't mean that you can handle everything. Knowing that you have support and backup is crucial to staying in control of your own behaviour and responding appropriately. Accept your limits and keep in mind that sometimes the best decision is to let someone else take over.

6. **Debrief.**

Be sure to debrief after any incident. Talking about it can help relieve the stress. It's also important to consider what was done well and how to respond better the next time a situation occurs.

(From <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/August-2012/Behavior-Management-Strategies> accessed 12/09/19)