



Two Ways To Apply The Golden Rule

In a previous post I talked about positive social reciprocity (the social psychology version of the Golden Rule) and its relationship to preventing and de-escalating crisis behaviors. Remember, the more positive relationship that you have with your care-receiver the greater the potential to de-escalate

challenging behaviors during any of the phases of the crisis escalation route!

Positive social reciprocity refers to any action on the part of the caregiver that recognizes the value of the care-receiver as a fellow human being. It is any action that expresses the worth, dignity, and respect towards your care-receiver. Positive social reciprocity conveys friendship, warm regard, and sincerity through one's words, touch, and body language.

Positive social reciprocity is given because of who your care-receiver is, not because of what s/he has done. In other words, *positive social reciprocity is given to your care-receiver freely not as some type of consequence for doing what you want him/her to do.* The former is based on a genuine desire for relationship, the latter is a *tool* to gain control over a person.

The Golden Rule says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In other words, treat others as you would want to be treated. There are two ways in which you can apply the Golden Rule or positive social reciprocity:

1. **Verbal.** Verbal refers to any words (and tone of voice!) that express feelings of love, respect, and value. This includes those things that you say throughout the course of the day that are uplifting for your care-receiver to hear regardless of his receptive language ability. It also includes the words that you say during more serious times such as when your care-receiver is exhibiting challenging behaviors. For example, sometimes when one of my boys moves into the Refusal Phase of the crisis escalation route, it requires that I respond to him by setting limits (Why? Because your care-receiver is becoming less rational during this phase!). Limit setting requires that I offer two specific choices to choose from:
 - a. For example, I can say, "You can choose to do turn off the computer and come eat dinner or stay on the computer and not eat dinner. Which one do you choose?" Negative social reciprocity would be evident through an angry and loud tone of voice while saying these words. Positive social reciprocity would include the exact same words but with a neutral tone of voice and a normal level of volume.
 - b. In other words, in my example it's not necessarily the specific words that I say, it's *HOW* I say them that sets the Golden Rule into action. Remember that

negative social reciprocity tends to produce negative responses by your care-receiver and positive social reciprocity tends to produce positive responses.

2. **Physical.** Physical refers to any type of physical contact that expresses respect and value for the care-receiver. A hug, pat on the back, or gently holding your care-receiver's hand are forms of positive physical social reciprocity. Care-receiver's tend to respond well when touched in this how. However, the converse is true: a hard smack on the back, or roughly grabbing and squeezing your care-receiver's hand will tend to produce a negative response and escalate crisis behaviors.

To sum it up: the two ways that you can apply the Golden Rule (positive social reciprocity) is through verbal and/or physical means, words and actions. Your words and actions can reflect the worth, dignity, and respect that you have towards your care-receiver and lets them know that they are valued as a fellow human being regardless of diagnosis. In addition the concept of the Golden Rule as applied in Relational Crisis Prevention is one based on a valuing our relationship with our care-receiver not a tool to gain compliance.

Applying the Golden Rule as I've described will go a long ways towards maintaining a healthy relationship with your care-receiver and allow you to be more effective in de-escalating crisis behaviors.

If you know of anyone else who could benefit from this article please feel free to forward it to them.