



*When it comes  
to queries on Sexual Health,  
let's help everyone*

**TALK BEJHIJHAK**

*A Counselling Aid for FOGSI Partners*

At FOGSI we are proud to collaborate with you through our initiative – Pankh that brings quality healthcare and awareness to India's youth. It's built to bring experts like you together to feed curious minds with right knowledge on contraception, sexual health and more. An initiative that's driven and propagated through a thoughtfully crafted campaign, **Talk Bejhijhak.**

As we move forward in this endeavour, we bring you this quick reference booklet that brings your attention to the key elements in Family Planning counseling which when applied well will make the conversations adolescent and youth friendly. It will empower you to build your expertise in this arena and take it a notch above.

Experts like you can widen the scope of clients who can benefit from your services. The youth and adolescents who seek guidance for sexual and reproductive health issues will be empowered through the right knowledge backed by quality services.

Together, let's ensure Pankh provides an opportunity to adolescents and youth to **Talk Bejhijhak**

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## Let's build soft skills for Family Planning Counselling

To fulfill the principles listed for effective family planning counselling, it is important for the provider to demonstrate the following communication and counselling skills:

- Uses **simple understandable language** throughout the conversation
- **Listens attentively and actively** to what the client says (active listening), using nonverbal facial expressions and gestures, such as smiling and nodding, to further encourage the client
- **Asks the client open-ended questions** to increase the amount of information provided
- **Paraphrases and summarizes** what a client says and reflects back feelings, to show client that he/she is listening and to help client organize her/his thoughts
- **Maintains a friendly tone of voice** and never pressures the client to finish speaking
- **Uses prompts as needed** to help client continue a narrative and encourages client to speak
- **Demonstrates sensitivity** to cultural, religious, and other psychosocial factors that affect a woman's (or a couple's) decisions about family planning
- **Keeps in mind that clients may become embarrassed** discussing family planning and related issues
- **Recognizes the potential importance of the partner's or other family members' views**, and helps the client overcome potential barriers; teaches negotiation skills (such as to get her partner to use a condom), if needed
- **Uses visual aids appropriately** to increase clients' understanding and retention of information.
- **Remains non-judgemental throughout the conversation**
- **Demonstrates Empathy**
- **Provides positive feedback** during the conversation wherever required

## Let's build effective non-verbal communication

To facilitate communication, it is important for the provider to use open and accepting body language. The provider needs to pay attention to her/his body language to avoid sending unintentional nonverbal cues.

Crossing the arms in front of the chest, for instance, sends a signal that the provider is “closed” or defensive. Smiles and nods communicate acceptance and are important, effective non-verbal signals.

It is often helpful to keep in mind the acronym “ROLES,” which refers to nonverbal behaviors that encourage communication and help put clients at ease:

- R- Relax
- O- Stay open and approachable
- L- Lean towards the client
- E-Encourage client by nodding and smiling
- S- Sit facing client, have eye contact and smile

## How to listen actively

- Meet with your clients in a private, comfortable place.
- Accept your clients as they are. Treat each as an individual.
- Listen to what your clients say and why they say it. Notice their tone of voice, choice of words, facial expressions, and gestures.
- Put yourself in your client's place as she/he talks.
- Keep silent sometimes. Give your clients time to think, ask questions, and talk. Move at the client's speed.
- Listen to your client carefully instead of thinking what you are going to say next.
- Every now and then, repeat what you have heard, paraphrasing in your own words what the client said. Then both you and your client know whether you have understood.

## How to ask questions effectively

- Use a tone of voice that shows interest, concern, and friendliness.
- Ask only one question at a time. Wait for an answer.
- Ask questions that let clients tell you their family planning needs. Examples are: "What does your partner think about family planning?" "How many children do you want?"
- Ask open-ended questions.
  - These are questions that cannot be answered "yes" or "no." These types of questions encourage clients to say more.
  - Examples are: "How can I help you?" "What have you heard about injectables?"
- Use short, prompting questions, such as "And then?" "Oh?" "Yes! Then what happened?" "You were saying?" (Nods and pauses are also useful as prompts.)
- Avoid starting questions with "why," or "why didn't you," as this can sound as if you are blaming the client or finding fault.
- Repeat a question in a different way if it appears the client has not understood.

## Let's build Gender-Sensitive Counselling

Family planning providers may encounter circumstances and problems related to gender that influence clients' access to and use of family planning. To address gender-related issues in family planning counselling:

- Sensitively elicit information about a client's power to make decisions and obtain family planning methods, and any gender-related fears and anxieties related to family planning use.
- Offer clients information related to their reproductive rights concerning family planning.
- Encourage clients to make their own sexual and reproductive health choices.
- Consult with clients on when or if to bring partners into family planning counselling.
- Demonstrate respect for the client's right to privacy and confidentiality about use of family planning.
- Assist client in identifying safe strategies to prevent pregnancy and/or STIs/HIV based on her informed choice of family planning.

## Understanding the Essentials of Effective Communication

### Effective Communication

Communication is a two-way interaction between two or more people. Good communication means both good verbal communication (words & tone of voice) and good **non-verbal communication (body language)**

#### Verbal communication

Refers to the words used in the communication and the tone in which they are delivered. It is largely conscious and is controlled by the individual speaking

#### Non-verbal communication

Refers to actions, gestures, behaviours, and facial expressions which express feelings. It is largely unconscious and often reveals to the observant that real feelings or message being conveyed

#### Verbal communication skills:

- Active listening
- Verbal encouragement
- Positive tone of voice
- Using simple language
- Giving feedback
- Empathy
- Being non-judgemental

#### Positive non-verbal cues:

- Leaning towards the client
- Smiling not showing tension
- Presenting facial expressions which show interest and concern
- Maintaining eye-contact
- Nodding

#### Negative non-verbal cues:

- Reading from a chart
- Glancing at one's watch
- Yawning or looking elsewhere
- Frowning
- Fidgeting



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A graphic of a gender symbol, combining a teal male symbol (an arrow pointing up and to the right) and a purple female symbol (a circle with a cross inside).

# TALK BEJHIJHAK

Kyuki baat samajhdari ki hai

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