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# Self-Directed Skill Lessons

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Skills for Difficult Situations

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**Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation**

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**Skill Bundle:**    *Skills for Difficult Situations*

- Skills:**
- *Paraphrasing*
  - *Recognizing Conflict Situations*
  - *Evaluating Frustration Level*
  - *Disagreeing*
  - *Negotiating*
  - *Refusing Requests*
  - *Apologizing*
  - *Forgiving*

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--Sue McNamara

# Introduction

The *Self-Directed Skill Lessons* were inspired by the *Self-Directed Psychiatric Rehabilitation Activities*, which were published in 2011. Similar in style to that related product, the *Self-Directed Skill Lessons* are designed to be used by you, with or without the support of another person. The skill lessons are designed to help you to learn the skills you want and need, and they will help you to develop the skills to be satisfied and successful at home, school, work, or places where you socialize. This objective follows the main principle guiding the psychiatric rehabilitation process, which is:

Skills + Supports = Success + Satisfaction

## Format for the Self-Directed Skill Lessons

Each skill lesson is organized with:

- An Outline of the Skill Information
- An Example of the Skill
- Practice Exercises for Completing the Skill
- A Skill Use Worksheet

The *Outline* of the skill information includes what the skill means, why it's important, when to use the skill, and how to do the skill. The "how-to's" provide you with the steps you need to follow in order to perform the skill.

The *Example* of the skill shows you how the skill is performed using a scenario with a character in the scenario acting out the skill. Sometimes you will see the character thinking through some of the steps as well as engaging with another character for the other steps.

There are two Practice opportunities for each skill. *Practice 1* includes a scenario that continues from the one described in the Example. In this practice, you will perform the skill as if you were the main character from the scenario. This will give you a chance to walk through the steps of the skill in a fictional situation.

*Practice 2* requires you to think about a situation in your own life when you needed to perform the skill. In Practice 2, you will describe the situation and then perform each step of the skill as you've been taught in the lesson. This will give you another chance to gain some experience performing the skill. For most skills, you will need another person to role-play with you in this practice. The other person also may be able to give you some feedback about how you

performed the skill. You may repeat Practice 2, if you'd like to try out your skill abilities with different situations. You may need extra copies or additional paper for Practice 2.

The *Skill Use Worksheet* gives you a way to monitor your use of the skill in real-life situations. The worksheet is a chart that includes noting the dates of situations where you thought you needed to use the skill, a column to check whether you used the skill or not, and space to write the reasons that you did or did not perform the skill. This worksheet allows you to see your progress with the new skill. You may choose to make extra copies of the Skill Use Worksheet so that you can track you use of the skills for as long as you'd like.

This format of an Outline—Example—Practice is designed to help you walk through the parts of how to perform the skill one step at a time. Some people learn best by reading or hearing about how to perform a skill, while others learn best by seeing examples of how a skill is performed. We all learn by performing a skill repeatedly, and practice with feedback can make perfect! The outlines, examples, practices, and skill use worksheets are written in a self-directed perspective. This allows you to guide yourself in learning how to perform the skills so that you may be satisfied and successful wherever you live, learn, work, or socialize.

## How to Use Self-Directed Skill Lessons

You may choose to use these skill lessons by yourself, with others who might share similar goals and skill needs, or with the assistance of a support person. You may want to share your completed practices with a service provider or other person supporting you in order to show the progress you have made with your skill development.

If you decide to use these self-directed skill lessons with a small group of peers, then having only a few people in the group works best. It also works best when group members need to learn the same skills for similar residential, educational, vocational, or social goals so that you and your peers can share ideas and experiences with each other. Within your small group, you may practice the skills with each other and give feedback to each other. This will allow you and the other group members to see how well you have performed the skill or how you might improve your skill performance.

After you have learned a new skill and monitored your use of the skill, you will be able to see whether your skill has improved in real-life situations. You may choose to share this completed worksheet with others to show and discuss your progress with your new skill use.



## Skill Bundles

This bundle of skills is called *Skills for Difficult Situation*. There are 8 skill lessons included in this skill bundle:

- Paraphrasing
- Recognizing Conflict Situations
- Evaluating Frustration Level
- Disagreeing
- Negotiating
- Refusing Requests
- Apologizing
- Forgiving

### Skill Bundles for Skills for Getting-Along with Others

<b>Skills for Participating in Groups/Classes/Activities</b>	<b>Skills for Working Together</b>	<b>Skills for Working with Supervisors/Teachers</b>
Asking Questions Responding to Questions Clarifying Information Expressing Feelings Expressing Opinions	Scheduling Activities Coordinating Schedules Dividing Work Responsibilities Requesting Assistance Offering Assistance Volunteering for Tasks Giving Feedback Respecting Others’ Space	Assessing Task Performance Reporting Progress Sharing Self-Evaluations Requesting Feedback Responding to Feedback Recognizing Support Needs Disclosing Disability Evaluating Accommodations
<b>Skills for Socializing</b>	<b>Skills for Being a Friend</b>	<b>Skills for Difficult Situations</b>
Introducing Yourself Introducing Others Greeting Acquaintances Initiating Conversations Conversing about Social Topics Decoding Body Language Selecting Jokes	Acknowledging Praise Expressing Appreciation Giving Compliments Expressing Interest Responding to Feelings Extending Invitations Responding to Invitations Choosing Gifts	Paraphrasing Recognizing Conflict Situations Evaluating Frustration Level Disagreeing Negotiating Refusing Requests Apologizing Forgiving

This chart includes many skills for “getting along with others,” but certainly it is not an exhaustive list. In addition, clearly some of the skills could cross over into other bundles, but

this chart shows a way to categorize the skills and to break them apart into thematic, manageable skill bundles.

## **Summary**

In summary, the *Self-Directed Skills Lessons* are a new resource for you to use to develop your skills in your own living, learning, working, and/or social settings. We hope that you enjoy learning new skills in this way and can share your experiences with others.

Best wishes as you learn or improve some new skills and reach new heights to become satisfied and successful at home, work, school, and wherever you socialize!





# **Self-Directed Skill Lessons**

**Skill Bundle:**    *Skills for Difficult Situations*

**Skill:**            *Paraphrasing*

## Skill Lesson: Paraphrasing

### Skill Information

#### What it means:

Paraphrasing means you restate what another person has said to you.

Restating means that you use your own words to reflect what the other person has said. Restating is summarizing the main points or theme of the person's story or comments.



Paraphrasing is *NOT* repeating back what the other person said verbatim—that is parroting! And that can be very annoying for the other person to hear his or her exact words repeated back!

#### Why it's important:

If you Paraphrase, then you will be able to state your understanding of what the other person is trying to tell you. Restating what the other person said helps you to check out whether your understanding of what you heard was accurate.

Paraphrasing is especially important when you need to be clear about what the other person is saying. If someone is giving you instructions or feedback on your performance, for example, it will be important to be clear about the specific points and to be able to recall them.

Also, when you are trying to establish or maintain a close relationship with someone, it is important to let the person know that you are clear about things he or she is saying to you.

#### When to do it:

When you are having a conversation with someone. Paraphrasing usually happens naturally when talking back and forth with someone.

**Skill Information (continued)****How to do it:****1. Select Important Information**

Selecting Important Information means you pick out the key words that emphasize the message. If you can identify key words, it will help you to pinpoint what the other person is trying to tell you.



First, identify themes or points that are emphasized more than once. Sometimes a person will repeat something over and over—either in one set of remarks or many different times in the same conversation. For example, a person might repeat a phrase that someone else said, *“And then the bank teller said that I would have to go back to the end of the line! Can you believe it? To the end of the line!”*

Sometimes a person will emphasize a particular point, but use different words. For example, the person complaining about the bank teller might be telling you in several different ways that bank personnel should be courteous, but say it like this: *“The teller was just rude! The two ladies behind me in line invited me to go ahead. That was nice of them. Why can’t the bank teller be polite like that? I never had these problems at my other bank—those people had good manners.”* By listening carefully, you can recognize those topics or points that are emphasized more than once.

Second, check out whether you have identified the overall message as positive or negative. Often a person’s tone of voice or gestures will tell you that something is important.

Tone of voice means the sounds that suggest certain strong feelings. For example, an angry person might speak loudly; a scared person might get a squeaky voice; a sad person might get choked up. These feelings tell you that something is important.

**Skill Information (continued)**

Gestures often are used for emphasis, like “talking with your hands.” For example, a person might pound the table as a way of stressing a point. Facial expressions often change when someone describes something important.

You can Select Important Information while you are listening to the other person. If you do this as the conversation goes along, then you will be prepared to do the next part of Paraphrasing, which is to Rephrase the Message by saying it out loud.

**2. Rephrase the Message**

Rephrasing the Message means you state your understanding of what was said. Your paraphrase represents your best guess about what is most important in the message. You won’t know for certain if your guess is correct until you say it out loud. Rephrasing the Message gives you a chance to check out your understanding with the other person.

First, summarize the message into a brief statement. Start your sentence with the theme, then include one or two of the details. The summary should be specific, rather than vague or general. You should use your own words rather than repeating exactly what the other person said. Some people like to start out their summary in this way: “*It seems like you’re saying....*” Your summary should reflect the facts, rather than expressing agreement or judgment. What you’re trying to do here is to present a short, but accurate, summary of what the other person said to you.

Second, use a similar tone to what the person expressed to you. Watch what you imply with your tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions. If you think the person’s message was positive, then you should use an upbeat and energetic tone of voice when you state the message. If the message was negative overall, your voice should sound serious. When you match the emphasis, you reflect the person’s tone *without* adding your own feelings.

**Example of the Skill**

**Scenario:** Lydia and Olivia are roommates in a supported living apartment. Today, Olivia comes in with a shopping bag, and Lydia says, “How was the plant store?”

<p>Olivia:</p>	<p>Look what I got! We’ve been here in our new apartment over a month and we’re finally settled in. And now I have some plants that I’ve always wanted! It was fun shopping at the plant store. There was a really nice man there. He was funny because he was covered with dirt, so I know he likes plants like I do. I was nervous to ask him anything at first. But he was so nice! He gave me lots of advice after I told him about the apartment. He said I should have houseplants that like “moderate light.” Garden flowers need more light than they would get here. So I chose two plants. This one is an ivy, and this one is a spider plant. It’s called a spider plant because it makes extra little plants that hang down like spiders.</p>
<p>Lydia:</p>	<p>It sounds like you really liked shopping for plants! And you learned something from that nice man about which kinds of plants would grow well in our apartment.</p>

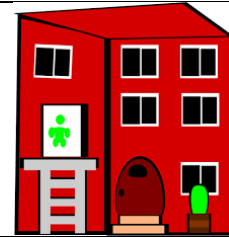


**Skill Practice 1**



**Directions:** Read the following scenario, and write your answers for each of the steps of the skill of Paraphrasing, as if you just moved into the apartment next door to Olivia and Lydia. Then practice the skill in a role-play with another person, who will act as Olivia.

**Scenario:** Olivia comes over to introduce herself to you. You want to make a good impression because you want to get along with your neighbors. Also, Olivia is giving you some information about rules in the apartment building that are important for you to understand.



Olivia said, “We’ve been here two months, and most of the neighbors are really nice. We all keep the place pretty clean. Trash goes out on Tuesday mornings, you know. We’re supposed to sort the recycling out from the regular garbage. Outside, where the trash goes, there’s a big blue barrel that’s for recycling. We’re supposed to keep it neat and tidy down there. All of the bottles and cans should be rinsed out before you put them in the recycle bin, so they’re clean. The landlord puts the barrels out on Tuesday, so we don’t have to do that, but we have to put our garbage in plastic bags and then put them in the barrels. If we use bags, then the barrels stay clean and don’t smell. And I have to be sure the lid goes on tight, otherwise animals could get into the trash and makes things pretty messy.”

**1. Select Important Information**


**2. Rephrase the Message**


**Skill Practice 2**



**Directions:** Write down a situation that happened recently when you were having a conversation with someone. Write your answers for each of the steps of the skill of Paraphrasing. Then practice the skill in a role-play with another person.

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>1. Select Important Information</b>
<b>2. Rephrase the Message</b>

## Skill Use Worksheet



**Directions:** Monitor your use of the skill of Paraphrasing over the next 2-4 weeks, indicating the dates when you think you needed to use this skill. Then check (✓) Yes or No for use of the skill, and write in why you did or did not use the skill in the right-hand column. Describe in the “Results” section what you think has changed since you used the skill.

<b>Skill: <i>Paraphrasing</i></b>			
Date I Needed to Use the Skill	Did I Use Skill?		Reasons
	Yes	No	
<b>Results:</b>			