

EU-Assistant:
Development of a VET
curricula for Personal
Assistant professional
profile based on the
European Framework of
Qualifications

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**MODULE 4 -
COMMUNICATION
ABILITIES**

disability

EU assistant

Development of a VET curricula for Personal Assistant professional profile
based on the European Framework of Qualifications



Erasmus+

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1. MODULE DESCRIPTION

MODULE TITLE	Communication abilities
KEYWORDS	Communication, personal assistant, messages, verbal communication, non-verbal communication, ability to communicate, language, Web 2.0, Communication tools, Skype, Windows Live messenger, multimedia sharing, synchronous internet communication tools, VoIP
TARGET GROUP	The target group of the module are people who want to obtain some knowledge to become a personal assistant for a person with disability
LEVEL	intermediate
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES	Independent persons who want to become personal assistant for persons with disabilities
AIMS OF MODULE	This module provides participants practical, comprehensive knowledge, resources and networking opportunities on how to successfully start and operate as a personal assistant.
LEARNING OUTCOMES	Up on successful completion of the module the participant will learn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to communicate with a person with disability, - verbal and non-verbal communication, - how to improve his/her communication abilities using the internet -acquiring and organizing communication information -set the communication mode - use feedback
PREREQUISITE(S) SKILLS:	use of basic ICT
PREREQUISITE(S) COURSE:	none

GUIDED LEARNING HOURS:	5 hours
COMPETENCY	Identifies the communication capabilities of the person with disabilities. Sets the communication mode Makes communication and use feedback
ASSESSMENT	Assessment will consist of a multiple-choice test. Each test will consist of multiple-choice questions which will test candidates' knowledge and understanding across the learning outcomes.
CATEGORY	cost (cost optimization) time (efficient time management) s-quality (service quality) m-quality (management quality)
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL(S)	none

2. INTRODUCTION

Dear Participant,

Welcome to this Module! This module is created for people who want to become a personal assistant for disabled persons. In this module you will learn how to increase your communication abilities.

The module refers to the personal assistant's ability to communicate with the person with disabilities, regardless of the severity of the deficiency, finding the most appropriate forms of communication and the most appropriate style to promptly identify the needs of the person with disabilities and/or special needs, to reduce his/her isolation and prevent depression. You will obtain knowledge about communication styles, barriers, empathy, and assertiveness. Finally, you will see most popular online synchronous communication tools for personal assistant and person with functional diversity.

After these modules, you will be ready start working as a professional personal assistant!

Warm regards,

EU-Assistant Project Team

3. COMMUNICATION

Positive language empowers people.

3.1. Introduction

Using language is not difficult at all. There are some simple rules that help you understand what you need to say and why. Primarily, interaction and communication with people with/without disabilities is based on respect and courtesy.

Some disabilities are visible, others aren't. Because each person's situation is unique, the best solutions to make people with disabilities to participate as actively as possible in day-to-day activities appear when the person with disabilities and the personal assistant work together to develop alternative methods to the challenges faced by the person with disabilities when acquiring new knowledge or having to prove something. Often only a little patience and creativity is required.

Encourage the person with disabilities and point out that he/she will do better if puts out more effort and asks for help when he/she needs it.

Get as much information as possible about the person's disability. Talk to other people with disabilities because they know their needs and abilities best and will work with you.

Facilitate the learning of the person with disabilities by using various ways such as a handle for pencil grip, or a sloping table on which the materials can be placed, or a mp3 recorder to allow the person to record what they want.

It's necessary to use different techniques, but also communication. Provide the same information in different ways to see what is best for the person with disabilities.

Be flexible. There aren't two people with the same needs. The ability to be flexible can help you to work in individual circumstances.

Accept that disability exists. Non-acceptance of this fact means non-acceptance of the person.

3.2. Tips for communicating with person with disability

General tips for communication with persons with special needs

- ❖ Speak to a person with a disability as you would speak to anyone else. Speak in an age-appropriate tone.
- ❖ Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do. If you do not know, ask the person about the best way of communication.
- ❖ If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- ❖ Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.
- ❖ Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that" that seem to relate to a person's disability.
- ❖ When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
- ❖ Put the person first, not their disability.
- ❖ If you telephone to the person with special needs, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for the person to reach the telephone.
- ❖ When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking

Tips for communication with persons with mobility disabilities

- ❖ If possible, put yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level.
- ❖ Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device.
- ❖ Do not assume the individual wants to be pushed - ask first.
- ❖ Offer assistance if the individual appears to be having difficulty opening a door.
- ❖ Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- ❖ Remember that a person's personal space can include their wheelchair and crutches. Do not touch or push a person's wheelchair or move their crutches or walking stick without their permission
- ❖ Don't shout. Deafness and physical disability are not related.
- ❖ Be prepared – learn the locations of ramps and accessible facilities.
- ❖ When assisting in going up or down a kerb, ask the person if they prefer going backwards or forwards
- ❖ Ensure that there is a clear pathway to intended destinations. At meetings or restaurants, make a chair-free space at the table for the person using the wheelchair to sit.

Tips for communication with persons with speech impairments

- ❖ Concentrate on what the individual is saying.
- ❖ Be patient. Take as much time as necessary.
- ❖ Do not speak for the individual or attempt to finish her or his sentences.
- ❖ Try to ask questions which require only short answers or a nod of the head.
- ❖ If you do not understand something the individual says, do not pretend that you do. Ask the individual to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back.
- ❖ If you are having difficulty understanding the individual, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the individual if this is acceptable.
- ❖ Watch a person's body language and try to respond to any non-verbal cues

Tips for communication with persons with visual impairments or who are blind

- ❖ Tell to the person when you are leaving.
- ❖ Speak to the person when you approach to him/her.
- ❖ Say clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- ❖ Never touch or distract a service dog without first asking the owner.
- ❖ When you talk in a group, remember to present yourself and/or to present the person who is speaking.
- ❖ If you are offering a seat, gently place the individual's hand on the back or arm of the chair so that the person can locate the seat.
- ❖ Do not attempt to lead the individual without first asking; allow the person to hold your arm and control her or his own movements.
- ❖ Be descriptive when giving directions; verbally give the person information that is visually obvious to individuals who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps, mention how many steps are going to approach.
- ❖ Be descriptive when entering a new environment, giving an idea of major obstacles/objects are placed in front of your user.

Tips for communication with persons who are deaf or have hearing impairments

- ❖ If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- ❖ Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation (e.g. tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
- ❖ If you telephone an individual who have hearing impairments, let the phone ring longer than usual. Speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.

- ❖ Look directly at the individual, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face. Use short, simple sentences. Avoid smoking or chewing gum.
- ❖ "If a person has difficulty understanding something, find a different way of saying the same thing rather than repeating the original words over and over."
- ❖ "Reduce background noises when holding conversations– turn off the radio or TV or move to a quieter place."

Tips for communication with persons who are have cognitive disabilities

Severe cognitive disabilities: autism, Down Syndrome, traumatic brain injury and stroke

Less severe cognitive disabilities: attention deficit disorder (ADD), dyslexia (difficulty reading), dyscalculia (difficulty with math), learning disabilities in general

- ❖ Be prepared to repeat what you say, orally or in writing. There should be a preferred "channel" of communication, be flexible in adopting it.
- ❖ If you are in a public area with many distractions, consider moving to a quiet or private location.
- ❖ Be patient, flexible and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.
- ❖ Offer assistance completing forms or understanding written instructions and provide extra time for decision-making. Wait for the individual to accept the offer of assistance; do not "over-assist" or be patronizing.

Terminology and communication tips

SAY ✓	AVOID SAYING ✗
Person with a disability	Victim, suffering from ..., idiot
Person with special needs	Deformed, handicapped, retarded
Person with physical disability	Invalid, crippled
Person who uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
Person with hearing impairment	Deaf and dumb, deaf mute
Person with vision impairment	Blind, can't see, four-eyed cooker



- ✓ Positive language empowers.
- ✓ Relax.
- ✓ Listen to the person with special needs.
- ✓ Treat the person with special needs with respect, dignity and courtesy.
- ✓ Offer assistance but do not insist if your offer it is not accepted.
- ✓ People with the same disability may need different help.
- ✓ If needed use audio / tactile signs / presentations together with the visual ones.
- ✓ Be flexible. There are not two people with the same needs. The ability to be flexible can help you to work in individual circumstances.
- ✓ Avoid labels.
- ✓ Avoid to use terms like "handicapped", "retarded", "idiot", "confined to a wheelchair" etc. because these are inappropriate words, they do not reflect the individuality, equality or dignity of people with disabilities. You cannot use the words like "normal person", because this imply that person with disability it isn't normal. You can use the terms "persons with special needs" or "persons with disabilities" because these are descriptive not negative.
- ✓ Accept that disability exists. Non-acceptance of this fact means non-acceptance of the person.

4. COMMUNICATION STYLES AND SOCIAL SKILLS

To ensure a stable and effective working relationship between the personal assistant and the user it is very important to be able to communicate well.

It is necessary to be aware that the conflicts are normal and that they will appear, however if both parties want to maintain that relationship, they will have to face them and learn to solve them, never to avoid them, because they will appear again in the future and with more resentment.

Good communication and mutual respect are the keys so that a conflict does not become something irresolvable. Sometimes, however, it would be desirable to go to the service manager for mediation.

Aspects to consider:

- It is impossible not to communicate. All behavior is a form of communication.
- Human communication involves two modalities: verbal and non-verbal. Many communication problems are due to a discrepancy between the two modalities. (* Explain both)
- The most important thing about communication is the willness to communicate. (* Example person with speech articulation problems)
- Language must be understandable to both parties.

It is important to be aware of how we produce the speech, how we expose our ideas and how we are influenced by previous ideas we have (prejudices). Be aware also that, sometimes, we interpret the words of the other giving a meaning or meaning different from the one that the other pretended.

VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Non-verbal communication is inevitable.
- Up to 93% of the meaning comes from the nonverbal (58% would correspond to gestures, 35% would use voice to transmit words - eg tone) and only the remaining 7% of meaning would fall into the Importance of the word.
- The shape, tone of voice, etc. They are going to be determinants to know the meaning of what is said to us and the emotion of who expresses it.
- When we receive contradictory messages between both types of communication, we are left with non-verbal communication.

- Gives us information about the other person, their feelings...

4.1. Social skills

Social skills are a set of habits or styles (including behaviors, thoughts and emotions) that allow us to improve our interpersonal relationships, feel good, get what we want and get others to not prevent us from achieving our goals.

We can also define them as the ability to relate to others in a way that we get maximum benefits and a minimum of negative consequences, both short and long term.

4.2. Communication styles

PASSIVE STYLE

When someone acts passively he does not express himself. Let others send you, tell you what to do, and generally do not defend your own rights. As a rule, your needs, opinions or feelings are ignored, and other people may take advantage of it.

AGGRESSIVE STYLE

At the other extreme are people who are aggressive. They are bossy, intimidate others, criticize and humiliate them. They only care about getting what they want and when they want. They rarely care about the feelings of others and often get into trouble or fights.

They tend to take unfair advantage of each other and generally have very few real friends. Therefore, it is clear that both passive and aggressive social behavior are not the best way to relate to others. These two behaviors lead either to being hurt (passive style), or to hurting others and taking advantage of them (aggressive).

ASSERTIVE STYLE

It is the most effective way to communicate.

The person who communicates assertively expresses clearly what he thinks, feels or needs, taking into account the rights, feelings and values of his interlocutors. It allows a person to mobilize based on their most important interests, defend themselves without anxiety, comfortably express honest feelings or exercise personal rights, without denying those of others.

We behave assertively when...

- We maintain a balance between our rights and those of others.
- Strongly defend our rights but not disturb or hurt anyone.
- We say what we think, want and want clearly.

- Our friends perceive us as safe from ourselves, sincere and pleasant.

4.3. What is communication good for?

- To establish contact with people.
- To give or receive information.
- To express or understand what we think.
- To convey our feelings.
- To share or share something with someone.
- To connect emotionally with others.
- To bond or unite with affection.

Effectively communicating involves:

- Not only hear but listen effectively (make an active listening)
- Be able to say what we mean (and not anything else).
- Be consistent in what we say and how we say it (verbal and non-verbal communication).
- Express clearly and reinforce messages through gestures and body position.
- Adapt the communication to the situation and characteristics of the other person.
- Ensure that the listener understands and the message.
- Know how to interpret the other person's possible response.

4.4. Communication barriers

Originated by ENVIRONMENT:

- Noise
- Uncomfortable physical space or not discreet,
- Interruptions (phone calls ..) and other distraction elements (like extraneous persons entering in the room...)

Originated by ISSUER (who speaks)

- Lack of ability: inaccurate, dense, detour, ...
- Inadequate vocalization
- Lack of empathy

Originated by RECEPTOR (who listens)

- Lack of attention / interest: haste, worry, etc.

- Prejudices, stereotypes
- Interpretations
- Lack of feedback

The use of the Feedback mainly serves to increase the effectiveness of the communication and is very used in Active Listening.

4.5. Active listening and empathy

ACTIVE LISTENING

It is the act of listening with attention and concentration to the interlocutor, showing that interest to the interlocutor through non-verbal actions such as nodding, looking into the eyes, asking questions...

It is important to listen fully without thinking about what we will answer later (*frequent mistake).

Techniques that help active listening:

- Sit naturally
- Let it speak - Let it speak: allowing time and spaces to do it
- Do not be distracted, focus on your interlocutor
- Keep your mind clear
- Evaluate the content and not the way of saying things
- Keep eye contact
- Paraphrase and summarize, send the message you are listening to
- Take notes when necessary
- Do not interrupt, wait until the end
- Do not jump to conclusions
- Try to listen to the main ideas

EMPATHY:

It is defined as the ability to put oneself in the other's place, going to feel what he thinks and what he feels. In other words, it is the ability to receive and perceive the experiences of other people, especially moods.

It is a basic ability in interpersonal communication that allows the understanding between two people, something essential in the dialogue.




Empathy can change the disposition of the interlocutor, be it of annoyance, distrust, opposition or tension. If we are empathic our partner will feel understood and relaxed because he will understand that he does not have to make an effort to make himself/herself understood.

Attitudes that help to establish empathy:

- Understand the other, to collect their emotions, thoughts, opinions, objections or complaints.
- Be able to capture what the other expresses from the perspective of the other.
- Ask to make sure I understand your message.
- Observe his/her non-verbal language to detect feelings and moods.
- Make movements and gestures similar to those shown by the other.
- Observe nodding during the communication.
- Repeat the idea with your own words, paraphrase.
- Let the speech end, reducing the interruptions.
- Observe how the interlocutor feels.
- Use a tone of voice and soft volume.
- Pay attention to physical contact.
- Consider and evaluate the opinion of the interlocutor even when it is different from ours.

5. STRATEGIES AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES THAT FACILITATES COMPUTER WORK FOR PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

5.1. For persons with mobility impairments

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<p>Touching all the keys on the keyboard</p>	<p>Changes to standard keyboards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using a keyguard (a type of lid with holes for each key) that guides THE fingers by touching the keys:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Settings in Control Panel / Ease of Access to change various keyboard use methods (facilitating various shortcuts, etc.) <p>Using alternative keyboards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using a large, wide keyboard for those who can move their hands and fingers on larger portions  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using a useful mini keyboard for those with hand movement span difficulties  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using a compact keyboard for those who can only use one hand and can make very limited movements:



- Using the on-screen keyboard (virtual keyboard)





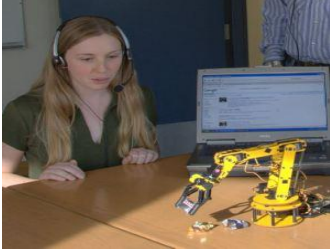







- Rearrange the letters closer (Dvorak keyboards) for those with wrist movement difficulties or who use two fingers when write something:



- Using the Corded keypad (two or six keys) when the hand cannot move, and the fingers remain in a stationary position on the keys, or the CyKey type (with touch keys that must be pressed gently) for those who cannot pick up your fingers.



	 <p>- Using the Matias keypad (available for the right or left hand) or Frogpad (all half keyboard, but more difficult to use because it requires re-keying) for single-handed users:</p>  
<p>Mouse and other methods</p>	<p>- Choose from the Windows menu (in Control Panel / Ease of Access) that all commands are made from the keyboard, whether to use the mouse or not, etc.</p> <p>- Use of other types of Mouse: Joystick, trackball (for those who cannot use their hands very well), track pad</p>      <p>- Using a switch with an on-screen keyboard for different programs that require a simple scan selection:</p>   <p>- Using a special Mouse Adapter for those who have a trembling of the</p>

hand:



- Ballpoint Mouse - a portable handheld mouse that can be used by those who can use their thumb and forefinger:



- Using tactile devices that allow the person to interact with the computer by receiving tactile impulses:




- Using an electronic mouse control device that allows the person to use the screen cursor by ultrasound or infrared.

- Using Mouse Mats / Tables for people who have problems with the column, problems with their upper limbs, or are unable to move a lot in the wheelchair:

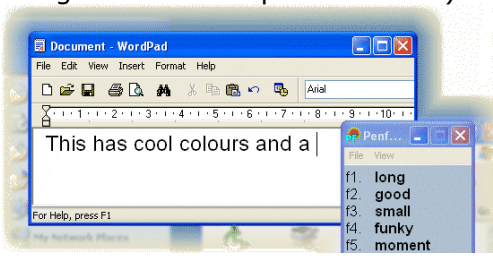



- Using a Foot Mouse:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using voice recognition software (for example Windows or Dragon Dictate). - Use of touch screens or touch pad, which allow the student to control the computer by touching the tactile surface:
	
Faster typing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of macro orders, special keys that allow the person to manage his time faster and better. - Abbreviations programming for most words / phrases. - Using software that allows automatic word prediction when the person types two to three letters of the word.

5.2. For persons with hearing impairments

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Computer writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using a Word Writer (standard features of multiple word processors working with a word / dictionary list and offering options for misspelled words). - Using a word prediction program (software that suggests words based on the letters you entered, there are software that can provide the following word with regard to text or previous uses):
	
Presentation of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of information by visual signals (for example, an email has been received):
	
Multimedia access (for example, video)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use screenshots - Provide information on paper or Power Point presentations

5.3. For persons with visual impairments

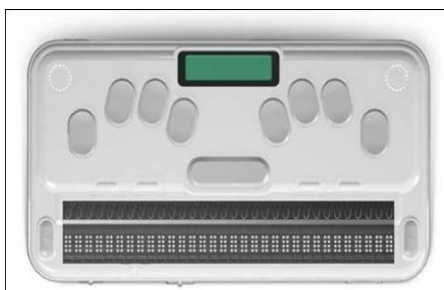
PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<p>Reading keys on the keyboard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use high-writing labels with a large contrast to the color of the keyboard: <div data-bbox="598 459 1444 683" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using the touchpad keyboard. - Using a Braille Keyboard
<p>Read the information on your computer monitor. Using your computer</p>	<p>Maximize visibility / increase information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adjusting the color of computer screen in Control Panel / Ease of Access - Reduce the glare effect by adjusting the illumination (in the Control Panel / Ease of Access) - Using Windows voice recognition (in Control Panel / Ease of Access / Speech Recognition Process) - Using speech synthesizers (for example, JAWS 12) and reading software that appears on the computer screen to allow person to hear the text that appears on the screen: <div data-bbox="885 1164 1157 1310" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using programs that read through text synthesis any text that is on the screen (Text to Speech). - Use the Zoom feature to have an enlarged font. - Allow the person to use a magnifying glass screen, which will increase his writing on the screen: <div data-bbox="861 1556 1181 1814" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use office or portable electronic magnifiers (Merlin LCD or portable magnifiers) to allow the person to see the enlarged letters on the screen. It is necessary to increase the text by 4-16 times in order to be read:






- Optical Character Recognition Systems - scans the printed word and transmits text to the computer:



-Using Braille Lite, a Braille keyboard, or a Braille display (replacing the computer monitor and giving the user the descriptive and textual information they need to interact with applications)



- Using Braille Computer/Organizer like Pronto! 40 V4

	 <p>- Use of incoming peripherals by persons with severe vision impairments:</p> 
<p>Printing</p>	<p>- Use large 16-18 letters in print materials. - Use a scanned text reader, consisting of a scanner and a portable computer on which an optical character recognition application is installed:</p> 

6. RESOURCES

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/>

https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pdf/disabilityposter_photos.pdf

https://www.westerncape.gov.za/text/2016/November/communicating_with_people_with_disabilities.pdf