**Artifact #7**

Mental Health Issues

Summer 2008

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Lesson 3

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Communication is so important when you are a teacher. Not only are you communicating with your students, but you need to communicate with other staff members and family of students. There are many skills of communication that I could work on to help others deal with mental health issues. Being assertive, listening to students when so much is going on, clearing my mind and focusing, and making sure to give positive feedback are 4 of these skills that I could work on.

Being assertive is hard for me. I do not feel that it is so bad that I get taken advantage of, but a lot of the time I just keep my mouth shut thinking it will make it easier. If I want to communicate more effectively, I need to work on speaking up when I need something, of want something to change. I can better advocate for students with mental health issues as well.

Listening to students sounds easy enough but when your day is so busy, and you have so many students, it can be a real challenge. I find myself not having time to really communicate with each student in a fair way. I do try to say hello at the door each morning and check in with them throughout the day, but I always feel rushed.

Focusing on who I am talking with goes along with listening. When I am talking to a student or staff member, I should make sure to clear my mind and focus on what is being said. I know how it feels when someone is not really listening to you. It is frustrating.

Positive feedback is something that is easily given but something that I have to remind myself to do. Focusing on negative behaviors sometimes seems easier in the moment but in the long run does nothing. The criticisms start to fall on deaf ears.

I will set goals for myself for my next school year. I will have to check in with my goals each week to see if I am fulfilling them. If I am having a hard time with a goal I could talk it out with a co-worker to see if I need some more pointers.

If I can improve at being assertive, listening, focusing, and giving positive feedback to students, staff, and families I think trying to help students with mental health difficulties will be a lot easier for everyone!