

Communicating Respectfully About the People We Work With

Client Responses to Questions: October 2000

Question #1: Has a staff person in a mental health program or hospital ever said something disrespectful to you or someone you know? If so, will you give me an example of that?"

Please read these responses over and be prepared to discuss your impressions in small groups.

1. A person in authority used to treat me like I was a child.
2. There was a woman who used to make faces behind peoples' back and sometimes she would say disrespectful things about patients.
3. A staff person used to swear at me.
4. I've been ignored and not take seriously.
5. I used to get hurt in restraints.
6. I was overmedicated so I would do what they wanted me to do.
7. My doctor would never listen to what I wanted and didn't want to take for medications.
8. No.
9. I can't think of anything.
10. Many people in the group responded to the question as follows, "Yup!";, "Oh yeah!"; "That's easy, have any of us ever been in a hospital!"
11. Sometimes I feel like I'm spoken to like that daily.
12. Many individuals made a distinction between the way they were treated by support staff and the way they were treated in the hospital.
13. Lot's of problems with lack of respect in the hospital. They're real assholes there.
14. I've had my confidentiality broken by staff saying things (in the hospital) at the front desk where other people could hear.
15. If I could count every time I've heard in the hospital 'move over there, go sit in your seat...'
16. It's disrespectful when people are nice but they're still mean. Like staffs' tone of voice is sweet but they're telling you what to do or talking down to you like you don't know anything.
17. It's disrespectful when people tell you what to do and when to do it like they have control over you.
18. I think the staff turn over rate at Advocates is disrespectful. I get to know someone, they want me to tell them about myself and then they're gone. (lots of agreement from the group on this one.)
19. People don't stay long enough. They leave too fat.
20. I was disrespected in the hospital when a staff person hit on me. It made me really uncomfortable, like I was trapped. I told them no. It was unprofessional.
21. Sometimes staff are disrespectful when they think they are being funny. A doctor diagnosed me with borderline personality disorder after meeting with me for five minutes. I complained to a nice hospital staff person who said, Do you know what's between Mexico and the U.S.?... the Borderline. He started laughing. Did he actually think that was funny?

22. Doctors disrespect me who tell me to go to Westboro.
23. People telling me I imagined my children when I have three children.
24. Staff telling me I'm paranoid and not believing me.
25. People telling me that I can never be a parent.
26. Staff pushing medications on me is disrespectful.
27. Using restraints just because I didn't want to take a med and then giving it to me by shot.
28. I have tons of stories. How long do you have to talk about it?
29. It's disrespectful to talk to me about sexual situations. It made me feel uncomfortable. I asked if we could leave my apartment and he said no, we had to meet in the apartment. I felt trapped and disrespected because he didn't care that I was uncomfortable and didn't want to hear what he was talking about.
30. One staff told me that I would be seeing my primary staff anymore and he was taking her place. That was disrespectful. She wasn't even leaving and was still planning on seeing me. Who was he to tell me that when it wasn't true.
31. I feel disrespected when I'm standing with a staff person, another staff walks by and says hi to me the staff person and not me. They just look through me. That's just rude.
32. When doctors talk down to me like a child or as if I'm not even in the room.
33. Only once, when I was living in the Coops, a staff said, "You are a real nut job."
34. Forcing a client to go to bed.
35. Staff telling a client to calm down.
36. Staff "shadowing" a client in a store.
37. No
38. Yes. Being called stupid when I couldn't figure out how to do my chores.
39. Yes. I had been here a month and we were cooking food in the oven and there was a fire. The staff said, "see what happens when you don't clean the stove. It is your fault." I was blamed for this and it wasn't my fault. I think staff just didn't want to take the blame.
40. Nobody ever bothered me.
41. No.
42. Not that I know of.
43. I don't want to answer.
44. Yes. Staff gave me hell for going to bed early.
45. No.
46. One client recalled a time that a staff person said to him, "My taxes pay for your SSI." The client said that this was conveyed in a derogatory manner.
47. One client said he feels disrespected when other tell him he cannot do something. He feels general discouragement.
48. One client reported that she felt disrespected by a staff member at a clubhouse, but did not want to elaborate since she felt it would make her too angry.
49. One client mentioned an intake and the interviewer said to him, "You talk too much."
50. One client reported that a counselor lied about a situation.
51. A client mentioned that he feels disrespected when people look down their nose at him or say something overtly sarcastic.
52. A health care worker walked away from a client in the tub and did not come back to help the person.
53. One worker threw their hands in the air in exasperation that a client she was meeting was not at home and left the program in a huff.

54. One staff person told me it was a waste of their time to drive me to Mass. Rehab.
55. Staff cursed at a client when the client asked them to hurry up with their meds. "Fuck...I'm busy". Staff seemed scared and nervous.
56. Staff accused me of drinking and threatened to send me to the hospital.
57. I know staff (that disrespected me) but I won't mention names. They drugged me up so much (in the hospital) but not in the programs.
58. No, staff members in programs – their all nice.
59. Not when I was younger either, although I remember them eating pizzas and I couldn't eat and I got sick. There are bad staff in hospitals. It depends on who you are. If they like you. I'm petrified of hospitals except for CRH.
60. No.
61. I've met bad staff before in hospitals.
62. At McCleans I was called a doink.
63. TJ said, Chuck doesn't want to hear anymore of your horse-shit.
64. The staff called me a faggot and made sexual comments about my (name of a stuffed animal).
65. Called me a name.
66. When I was being restrained the staff threatened me, "you keep fuckin with me and I'll break both your arms.
67. Nothing I can remember.
68. Auburndale clients had a difficult time with this question. Two clients got up and left the room after the conversation started. Others gave very brief answers while others had difficulty recalling any disrespect by staff.
69. Four clients reported verbal abuses, all while in hospitals.
70. Rude comments and yelling and demeaning comments.
71. A client reported being shut in a quiet room against her will for not taking medications.
72. A client reported not only verbal abuse but physical as well, stating that while in a state hospital he had his head smashed, more than once.
73. Most clients declined to give concrete examples of statements made by staff.
74. Even though I told clients that their names were not being used and they didn't need to say if it was a staff person at Advocates, many didn't want to participate and others quickly answered no.
75. At Westboro they treated you rough to get privileges. They confronted you about everything.
76. Trying to say what's on your mind but sometimes staff don't want to listen.
77. Bad listeners.
78. State hospital attendants would not allow me to hold my own radio and would hold it for me so I could hear my music.
79. State hospital staff called me names ("Grandpa") and were sarcastic toward me.
80. Rude
81. Some staff have been rude and have not shown up after promising to.
82. "I'm sick of your shit."
83. "Is she always a drama queen?"
84. "You're acting like a fifteen year old."
85. Staff instigating power struggles.
86. Taunton Hospital – unnecessary restraints.
87. Not being listened to or understood.
88. WBSH – thrown out of bed.
89. WBSH – What staff call being a "chum-pal".

90. Expressing suicidal ideation while in a hospital, staff member stated, “You shouldn’t say that. You’ll never get out of here.” Not allowing client to have own feelings.
91. No specific example, but times when felt as if being told what to do – not giving choices.
92. All other clients answered “no” to this question.
93. In other programs I had staff show they hated their job.
94. I feel stigmatized and disrespected if staff make me get in a van with a bunch of people.

Question #2: How do staff show you respect?

1. They’re pushy with me. I like that. (assertive, challenging, not afraid to confront or to say the truth.)
2. Makes us meals and stuff.
3. They’re nice.
4. Take time out to ask you how you are. Will try to help you out.
5. Don’t impose their own ideas.
6. Remembering birthdays and sober anniversaries.
7. When they listen with full attention.
8. When they really understand what I’m saying
9. Being honest with me.
10. Talking with me.
11. Spending time with me.
12. Socializing out on the back porch.
13. Joking with me.
14. Feeling staff is on my level – equal to me.
15. Make me feel important and that I belong here.
16. Genuineness.
17. Treated me as an equal.
18. When I feel the connection between clients and staff – one group.
19. When they really listen.
20. Many ways but I can’t think of examples.
21. They teach me things and bring me places and help me with my money.
22. Just being kind is respectful.
23. Treating me well.
24. Listening to my problems and recognizing that I may be angry/having a bad day but that it’s not directed at them.
25. By not just cutting off a conversation or implying that a topic I want to talk about is a bad thing, but instead saying something like, “Let’s talk about this later.”
26. Being friendly.
27. Treating people individually. Making allowances for individuals.
28. Respecting that some days are harder than others.
29. Knock on the door without entering.
30. Offering help/being helpful/listening to problems.
31. Clients were much more willing to talk about this after that last question.
32. Show interest toward you.
33. Be ready to lend a helping hand when I’m having a hard time.
34. Speak to you in a quiet tone.
35. When I get the feeling that staff are working for me and not me working for them.

36. Being patient.
37. Almost all clients said that “being listened to” was the number one way they are shown respect.
38. Getting input and understanding of their thoughts and emotions.
39. Kind behavior and getting support.
40. People mentioned that “personal attention” and “interactions that show respect for their intelligence” was important.
41. People also mentioned that being trusted with certain tasks made them feel respected.
42. I don’t know.
43. Respect space.
44. If staff are polite.
45. If you’re having a bad day, don’t take it out on clients.
46. If someone asks you a question you don’t like, don’t snap at them.
47. When staff are friendly.
48. When staff talk to you when you’re feeling unsafe or bad.
49. They talk with me and help me with things.
50. You help me, believe things I say, don’t laugh.
51. Help me with bills.
52. By calling to ask how my day is going. Asking me if there is anything I need.
53. Help us out. Work on things we need to work on even though we’re at advanced level. Take people on vacation, etc.
54. People in the community still place a stigma but that’s to be expected. People make fun of you because you’re with Advocates.
55. Allow you to be as independent as you can and they help with that. They maybe can help a little more.
56. I like it when staff listen to me when I talk about why I don’t want to take my meds.
57. When people tell me what I have to do so I don’t forget. Even when I don’t want to do it, they at least care to help me do it.
58. Staff are always doing their notes.
59. They take us out on a 1:1 and get us coffee.
60. They help me after I get mad at them and yell. They don’t hold it against me.
61. They laugh with me. That means they care and can have fun with us.
62. Give praise for accomplishments.
63. Provide assistance with goals.
64. Good natured.
65. Provide support with problems.
66. Being friendly, nice, concerned with how I am doing.
67. Demonstrate empathy.
68. Have a sense of humor.
69. Get the job done.
70. They give me unconditional love.
71. Staff gives praise when I’m doing good.
72. I don’t know.
73. I’m not a client.
74. When staff are helpful.
75. Giving us space.
76. Talking with me.

77. By listening to my complaints and problems.
78. By making sure I get my meds on time every day and help me pick them up at the pharmacy.
79. Asking if I have any problems on a regular basis.
80. Allowing me to be independent and take my meds at the house and not having to walk over to the office all the time.
81. Staff does so much housework here. I don't think it's fair for staff. These guys should be doing their own chores.
82. By caring and talking about issues.
83. Not acting like they hate the job and don't want to be here.
84. Staff should have nice and respectful attitude.
85. Avoid punitive attitude. "I will report our behavior to supervisor." Better to tell client, "Your behavior is not safe. I may need to report..."
86. Staff gives clients attention.
87. Staff having a steady attitude.
88. Through understanding, compassion and forgiveness.
89. Having a kind word to say.
90. Try to be helpful by providing positive thinking, not negative. Show positive reinforcement not negative.
91. Staff let me bring my dog to respite. It felt like they respected me as a person, knew I was having a hard time and respected my need to get extra support but keep as much of my day to day life as normal as I could. I appreciate that. It shows they are really thinking about me as a person.
92. Staff show respect when they take care of my pets when I'm in the hospital. They know how important they are to me and it shows me they respect my lifestyle.
93. Almost all the staff at Advocates always say things with respect.
94. When they talk to me like I'm a human being.
95. I think it's respectful, the relationships different staff build with us. My primary worker doesn't do therapy but I wouldn't trade our relationship for anything. He treats me like a person. I know he really cares about me.
96. Relationships are key to showing respect. If I don't know you and don't have a relationship with you, then I'm not going to feel respected if you come in and want something from me or want to tell me what to do.
97. When they let you know you are a person first and that you have an illness second.
98. When they treat you like a human first, before a client or diagnosis.
99. (Specific staff person) treats us like equals. That's respect.
100. It's respectful when staff explain things well. When they don't rush over information or use terms I don't know.
101. When staff are courteous and offer to do things for you.
102. When they are respectful, then doing meds is easier.
103. It's respectful when staff help me to only get my meds 1-2X a day instead of 4 so that I can have a life.
104. You know you felt respected when you stop wondering, "Can I trust this person or are they just going to move on to another job soon."
105. Staff show us respect the same way you show other people respect. You treat them courteously, like people first.
106. It has been nice to travel with staff in their cars so no one driving by thinks I'm a client and they are the staff. No one passing by would think we were anything but two people in a car.

107. I feel respected when they don't make me feel like a patient and they are the staff.
108. I feel respected when we go on outings and there is food even if we have no money. It shows they respect my situation and know it's not my fault my check is small.
109. When staff help get me into what's happening in the area. When they don't treat me like I should miss out on the fun stuff just because I have an illness.
110. I feel respected when staff agree with me and what I want in my life.
111. When staff listen to my opinion.
112. When staff call if they are going to be late. The other day a staff person who was supposed to meet with me got a flat tire and four people, one who wasn't even working, called to let me know they wouldn't be coming.
113. When staff give me time to interact with them and others, especially on outings. They don't just have you eat and leave quickly.
114. The human rights committee shows respect.
115. They listen to you..
116. I don't know.
117. By being nice and going to bat for me at court when I really needed them.
118. Caring and asking how I am.
119. Staff take suggestions I make.
120. By the way they talk and body language.
121. By the tone of voice, whether or not they collaborate says a lot.
122. Treat me nice and treat my friends nice.
123. Maintain confidentiality.