3.8: Improving Communication

Some ways of improving communication are as follows:

- Listen without interrupting the sender.
- Show empathy at all times and try to understand.
- Try to stay focused on the conversation. Do not however, force the patient to continue if he/she becomes anxious or seems to wish to change the subject.
- Use the body language that indicates your interest and concern. Touch the patient if it seems appropriate. Lean forward, listen intently and maintain eye contact if it culturally acceptable.
- Offer factual information. This relieves anxiety. Do not offer your personal opinion. Assure the patient that you have professional discretion.
- Try to reflect the feelings and thoughts the patient is expressing by rephrasing questions and comments using their own words.
- Avoid unclear or misleading messages.
- Avoid giving long explanations.
- Give your co-workers your full attention when communicating with them.
- Ask questions to clarify unclear messages.
- Do not interrupt until the sender has completed the message.
- Provide a quiet environment without distractions.
- Be convincing when communicating [17].