



Tips for Effective Communication

Communication is having a two-sided conversation. It's about expressing yourself, sharing your thoughts and feelings with others in an honest and open way. It's about learning to assert yourself, to stand up for your beliefs while respecting and hearing the opinions of others. It's also about actively listening in an engaged manner. Below are tips to help you become a good communicator. Check off the tips you'd like to try or improve on.

- Don't have important conversations when tired or stressed. Ask the person to schedule a different time to talk.
- Be sensitive to moods (yours and others). You may need to save the discussion for later.
- Have an intention for connection with the other person and begin with empathy.
- Strive to understand the other person first – their needs, wishes and values.
 - Pay attention, look them in the eye, and ask appropriate questions. Take notes if it helps.
 - Be open to hearing whatever it is the other person needs to express. If they feel heard, they will more likely have the ability to hear you.
- Eliminate distractions. Leave the phone in the other room and don't multi-task.
- Listen more than you speak. Avoid interrupting or trying to redirect the conversation to your concerns.
- Use reflective listening. Listen, then acknowledge (reflect) what is said. This lets the other person know they are heard and gives you clarity in case you did misunderstand.
 - Pay attention to nonverbal signals. Words aren't the only way we communicate.

If needing to have a difficult conversation, request a time to discuss the topic.

- Practice being assertive by using "I" statements.
- Prepare your ideas and practice or role play if needed.
- Use accurate and neutral descriptions. When we are upset, we often interpret what has happened, using judgmental language, rather than accurately describing what has triggered us. This can get us into a heated argument quickly.
- Make requests that are practical, specific and positive, requests that will help fulfill your needs. This will help us refrain from complaining and allow the situation to change.
- Don't ask things of others that are too vague or too big, or are expressed as a negative request. Be positive and specific. For example, instead of saying "Stop making so much noise," try saying, "I am working. Can you please use headphones while playing video games?"
- Be willing to hear "No." Even carefully expressed requests might still elicit a "no" from someone.
- Take responsibility for your feelings.
- If you are tired or stressed, take care of yourself. It's much easier to have a productive conversation when you are well rested, centered, calm, and relaxed.