

Healthy Communication & Conflict Resolution

Healthy communication is important to maintain with our family, friends, and other important people in our lives. When we practice our communication skills, we are more likely to have positive outcomes, decrease negative feelings and improve our relationships.

Below are some skills we can learn and practice to improve our communication with others.

- 
- **Using "I" statements:** This skill is a good way of expressing how we feel without placing blame on the other person. A good way to practice this is by starting the conversation with an "I" statement. For example, "I feel hurt when...". This way, we are communicating how we feel and can figure out how to move forward.
 - **Problem-focused, not person-focused:** It's important to view a disagreement with someone as just that – a disagreement. We need to separate the problem from the person so we don't attribute negative feelings to the person we are disagreeing with. We want to solve the problem together.
 - **Take a break:** If you are feeling like the disagreement is getting nowhere, it's possible you and the other person need a break. Take a 20 minute break and come back to the problem clear-headed and calmer.
 - **Think before you speak:** Sometimes, when things get heated, it's easy to let our emotions get in the way of logic. To prevent saying hurtful things, it's important to think about what we are saying before we proceed.
 - **Reflective & active listening:** To exhibit good communication skills, we must be sure to listen well. Listening deeply to what another person is saying, and even practice repeating back to them what they said and/or how you interpreted the situation, can create better communication and prevent any misinterpretation.
 - **Future-focused language:** If you're not able to solve a disagreement in the present, it's possible to switch the language to more future-focused topics. If the problem isn't being solved right now, maybe you and the other person can figure out alternative solutions in the future. Avoid dwelling on the past.
 - **Use neutral language/avoid insults:** Although arguments may get heated, we have to remember that this person is special to us in some way. Even though we may be frustrated or annoyed, we still care for this person and don't want to further hurt their feelings.

Types of Communication

Passive Communication:

A communication style where the person might have developed a pattern of avoiding expression or emotions or feelings. This person might be more likely to bottle up difficult emotions and might not get their needs met.

Aggressive Communication:

A communication style where the person expresses their needs or emotions in a violent or violating way. This could leave to physically/emotionally abusive tactics.

Passive-Aggressive Communication:

A communication style where the person is seemingly passive, but might be acting out their anger in an subtly aggressive way. This person's needs might not be met, so they are upset, and might be taking it out on the person or object of resentment.

Assertive Communication:

A communication style where the person can state their needs and feelings honestly and openly. This person is respectful of others' needs and rights, so they can advocate for their needs without stepping on the toes of others. Adopting an assertive communication helps an individual balance between avoiding both no expression at all and aggressive expression.

For more info, read

https://www.uky.edu/hr/sites/www.uky.edu.hr/files/wellness/images/Conf14_FourCommStyles.pdf

Online Resources

- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/effective-communication.htm>
- <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/improving-communication.html>
- <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/assertive-communication.pdf>
- <https://www.winterparkha.org/12-essential-tips-resolve-family-conflicts/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/lifetime-connections/201711/confronting-conflict-friends>
- <https://positivepsychology.com/communication-games-and-activities/>