

## Communication

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### What is Communication?

Communication is the process of giving information from a sender to a receiver. The message could be sent by spoken words, written words, body language or other signs. Good communication occurs confidently and honestly. Some degree of eye contact is desirable (this may vary according to culture). But don't stare incessantly. It can feel intimidating to the other.

Don't send confusing or mixed messages. Make sure your body language, facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures match your words. Your attitude when you communicate is relevant to your message. Bulldozing into a conversation or talking over others is disrespectful. Respectful communication is not just about what you say, but when and how you say it.

Communication involves others, listening and knowing when it is 'your turn' to speak. Have sensitivity to others' feelings in what, how and when you communicate. Effective listening is part of good communication. Good communicators listen to others' views and respond politely to them. They don't just push their own point of view, but express disagreements respectfully.

### Good Communication

When someone else is communicating, listen carefully to what they are saying. Don't take your attention away from them to plan your own reply or talk over them. Let them finish before responding. Note what they have said and respond to *that* rather than only pushing your own view.

Choose your words carefully. Make sure your words mean what you want to convey. Sloppy language can cause hurt and misunderstandings. Words that put people down or unfairly criticise them do not contribute to effective communication. They cause hurt, embarrassment and resentment. You cannot expect to have a productive outcome from your conversation that way.

Avoid the temptation to rush, ramble on, or talk for long periods without stopping or giving the other person the chance to reply. A few words, well chosen, and spoken at an even, moderate pace, will convey your message more effectively than rambling on too fast or for too long.

### Especially for Couples

Share feelings, not just thoughts. Let the other know how you really feel. Don't expect them to mind read. Ask them how *they* feel – let them know it matters to you. Respond caringly and respectfully. Don't be dismissive, or trivialise what they say. Take it seriously and show that you do. You won't always agree on everything. That's okay if you both remain respectful.

Say what you mean and mean what you say. Don't confuse your partner by being inconsistent or unclear. Be logical and make sense. Don't play silly mind games or be underhand, manipulative or divisive. If you have a problem, explain it clearly and respectfully. Get to the point quickly but don't overwhelm your partner with an avalanche of condemnation.

Use 'I' statements – say what the issue means to you, not just criticism: 'You did this ...'. Rather say 'I felt you weren't hearing me when you did ...'. Keep calm when disagreements occur. Avoid crossing your arms, pointing fingers or using any threatening body language. Don't fiddle or tap your fingers.

Ask relevant questions, but not too many. Feel empathy for the other's position. Don't find distractions to avoid facing difficult issues. No matter how difficult things get, make time for intimacy, even if it is just sitting together, talking, watching a movie, listening to music, taking a walk, or holding hands.