

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Randall Krupsaw, Ph.D., HSPP, LLC
(317) 816-5600

Disruptive Habits (Avoid)

1. **Accusing or blaming**, which often takes the form of "You..." statements. E.g., "You never inform me of John's medical appointments."
2. **Long lectures/preaching**
3. **Commanding or ordering.**
4. **Sarcasm, put downs, or shaming.**
5. **Rejecting, criticizing, or denying each other's perceptions and views.**
6. **Dredging up the past.**
7. **Being cold and unresponsive.**
8. **Not listening or jumping to conclusions about what each other is thinking.**

Helpful Habits (Employ)

1. **Be assertive** by speaking about your own feelings and wishes in a way that's open but non-aggressive. Use the form "I feel ____ about/when _____. What I'd like is _____." E.g., "I feel left out and frustrated when I don't know about John's medical appointments. I'd like you to email me the appointment dates and times."
2. **Make simple, brief, and clear statements.**
3. **Ask nicely and assertively.**
4. **Use neutral language. Criticize the behavior instead of the person.**
5. **Accept and affirm each other's reality** even when there are major differences of
6. You can't change the past, so **stick to discussing just the present and the future.**
7. **Express empathy.** E.g., "I can imagine that you're feeling frustrated about this." **Remain engaged in the effort to communicate.**
8. **Use reflective listening** by listening attentively and thoroughly, and checking your understanding by stating it to the speaker and asking "Did I get it?" and "Is there more about that?" Keep listening, restating, and asking until the speaker confirms that the listener understands the intended communication.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>9. Hogging the conversation.</p> <p>10. Negative gestures.</p> <p>11. Interrupting.</p> | <p>9. Be brief and take turns speaking and listening.</p> <p>10. Use polite body language.</p> <p>11. Wait and listen patiently. Take notes if necessary about what you want to say when it's your turn to speak. Speak only after the speaker has confirmed that you understood his/her communication. At that point, the listener may become the speaker by saying "I'd like to respond now."</p> |
| <p>12. Runaway conflict (when disruptive habits take over and productive communication ceases.</p> | <p>12. Try to calm the conflict by (a) saying what you feel/need; (b) requesting a mutual effort to calm things down; © expressing regret for your role in the problem; (d) expressing willingness to find a solution to the conflict; (d) expressing appreciation; (e) suggesting a refocus on more positive communication; or (f) taking a break to calm down and then returning to good communication. Below are examples of what to say for each of these options for calming conflict.</p> |

WHAT TO SAY TO CALM CONFLICT AND RESUME GOOD COMMUNICATION

Saying What You Feel/Need

1. I'm feeling blamed. Can you rephrase that please?
2. My feelings are getting hurt. Please speak more gently.
3. I feel criticized. Would you please rephrase that?
4. I'm feeling misunderstood. Please let me finish what I was saying.

Requesting an Effort to Calm Things Down

1. I need things to be calmer right now.
2. Please help me calm down.
3. Let's slow down and take turns listening to each other.

Expressing Regret for One's Own Role in the Conflict

1. I became overly emotional. I'm sorry.

2. Please excuse me, and let me start again in a softer way.
3. Sorry I lost my temper. Let's try that over again.
4. Pardon me for interrupting. Please continue.
5. I'm having trouble understanding. Let me try again.

Expressing Willingness to Find a Solution to the Conflict

1. I'd really like to work this out so we're both as comfortable as we can be.
2. Let's find our common ground.
3. Let's agree to include both our views in a solution.
4. Let's compromise here.
5. What can we do about this situation so we're both as satisfied as possible?
6. This is not your problem, it's *our* problem.

Expressing Appreciation

1. I agree with part of what you're saying.
2. I think your point makes sense.
3. I see what you're talking about.
4. I know this isn't your fault.
5. Thank you for working on this with me.
6. I see your point. You're saying that...
7. I understand.
8. Thank you for...
9. I want you to know that I admire your...

Suggesting a Refocus on More Positive Communication

1. We're getting off track. Let's get back to your main issue.
2. We're arguing about the past. Let's focus on what we can do now and in the future to make things better.
3. Let's agree to disagree on that point.
4. Let's start over again.
5. Please let's stop arguing and get back to trying to understand each other and working toward a solution for our children.
6. We're losing track of what's best for our children. Let's get back to talking about that.
7. Let's switch to an easier topic for awhile.

Taking a Break to Calm Down

1. Let's take a break.
2. Please, let's stop for awhile. I'll get back to you this evening.
3. Give me a half hour to calm down, and then let's start again.
4. I need to take a break. When are you available to discuss this further?