

Communicating Effectively

Communication is an essential skill in a good relationship of any type. Here are some general principles of good communication to keep in mind:

- Use “I” statements when talking to others about your thoughts or feelings. This promotes ownership of what you are saying, which establishes a strong, direct position. Be honest and open about your feelings, opinions, and needs.
- Self disclose at a slow, but steady rate. This is the art of sharing your private thoughts and feelings with people you trust.
- Ask for what you need/want. Others can not read your mind, so limit your expectation that the other person should be able to guess what you prefer out of their affection for you. The best chance of receiving what you want is to speak up and ask for it!
- Check out your assumptions. You are no mind reader either. Misunderstandings can arise from acting on what you guess your friend/partner wants.

Some specific verbal skills to **improve** communication:

- “I” think statements (I think... I feel... I want)
- Broken record – repeating what you want, persistence (The way I see it is... In my opinion...)
- Acknowledge what other is saying, then repeat your view, opinion, etc. (I hear you saying... What I need is...)
- Provide feedback – respond to what other person is saying

Try the following phrase to improve communication:

- I feel (*insert feeling*) when (*insert event*) because (*insert impact or consequence*). I would prefer (*offer compromise*). How does that sound to you?

Avoid the following demanding and blaming statements:

- You make me...
- You think...
- You should/shouldn't...
- It's your fault...
- Don't you think...
- If only you would...