

# *Ways to Improve Communication*

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**Respect:** This sets a positive tone to any communication and benefits both parties.

**Timing:** When you say something can be just as important as what you say.

**Attention:** Offering your full attention says to the other person, “I value you and I value our relationship.”

**Rhythm:** Allow a back and forth conversational rhythm, letting one person talk while the other listens, and vice a versa. Remember, if you talk too long, too loudly, too softly, too fast or too slowly, you might lose your listener’s attention. Be aware and make an adjustment if needed.

**Pausing:** Don’t fill all the space in a conversation. Leave an opening and be silent.

**Tone of Voice:** Your tone communicates a lot more than your actual words. Is your fear, anger, or righteousness doing the talking? Stay aware of yourself and rationally communicate your thoughts and feelings without being run by your emotions.

**I-Messages:** Tell how you feel without name-calling or blaming. There are three steps.

1. Tell what is happening.                    “When \_\_\_\_\_
2. Tell what you feel.                        I feel \_\_\_\_\_
3. Explain why you feel that way.        Because \_\_\_\_\_.”

**True Listening:** To truly hear what another person is saying, it is necessary to turn your attention away from your own stream of thoughts in order to pay attention to the thoughts of someone else.

**Active Listening:** Listen to what the other person says. Repeat back, in your own words, what you’ve heard so you can check out if you are truly getting their message.

**Reflective Listening:** Listen for the feelings of the other person. Show that you hear, understand, and accept their feelings. Repeat in your own words what feeling you think you’ve heard expressed and the possible reason behind that feeling. For example: “You seem to be feeling \_\_\_\_\_. Is it because \_\_\_\_\_?”

**Open Questions:** These are questions that begin with: how, what, where, when, which and who. They communicate that you are interested and are inviting the other person to talk. Their answers will be more than just a short “yes” or “no”.

**Congruency:** Truthfulness. Say what you mean, mean what you say, and be who you are. Let your words and the way you act and the way you feel all match.

**Awareness:** Your conscious mind can notice what is actually being said during a conversation. The choices you make about what to say in response will be more informed and more able to serve your individual and relational needs if you stay consciously aware.