

Communication Workshop

An important part of a healthy community is open and honest communication. We need ways to communicate our feelings with other people, and ways to share with others how their behaviour is affecting us. Communication involves both giving and receiving information.

“I” Messages

The most useful tool for giving information is: “I” messages. “I feel ____ when you ____.” “I” messages help convey how another person’s behaviour affects you without judgement, focusing on the relationship without laying blame. Use these instead of “you” statements (“You are annoying me and you should stop”) or “why” questions (“Why are you being annoying?”), which may result in defensiveness, withdrawal and hostility. Focus on the behaviour, not the individual. Only give “I” messages about things the other person can change, and never use them when angry. “I” messages can feel awkward, but once you get into the practice of using them, they can be very effective.

Active Listening

This is a vital skill for receiving information. Whether it is a guest or colleague, active listening skills make the person who is talking to you feel like they are being heard during conflict resolution, when you are receiving feedback, or just in a normal conversation.

Body Language: Make eye contact, take off sunglasses, sit up and lean forward, put down whatever is in your hands, and uncross your legs and arms. Bring yourself to their level – if they are sitting, sit too.

Verbal Cues: “Mmm hmm,” “OK,” “yeah,” “Tell me more,” “I’m glad you shared that with me,” and “Thank you”. These will depend upon context and what is being shared.

Matching: Match your tone and volume to theirs. This obviously does not work if the person is crying hysterically, or if they are being louder than appropriate for the context.

Silence: It’s OK to be quiet when you are listening! It can be a very useful tool.

Repeating and Clarifying: Summarize and repeat what the person has shared with you as well as ask clarifying questions. This will show the other person that you are listening and help set things straight if you misunderstood what they were saying. Refrain from asking leading questions or questions that assume you already know the answer.

Feedback

This is a very specific type of information giving. This is used primarily in a peer relationship and addresses a person’s action or behaviour.

When giving feedback:

Use “I” messages

Ask permission. If the person says no, accept that.

Choose an appropriate time and place.

Do not use it as a weapon. Do not give it when you're angry.

Give it in a timely manner.

Be specific. Confront a person's specific behaviour. Don't evaluate the person or give feedback on something that the other person can't change.

Assume good will. When giving feedback, assume the person did not mean to offend you and was doing their best.

When receiving feedback, assume the person has good intentions and is trying to improve your relationship or performance.

Remember that feedback can be difficult for both the giver and the receiver.

Handout

Communication is key.

What are some different ways we communicate?

Verbal

- The words themselves

Non-verbal

- Voice
 - Pitch
 - Speed
 - Tone
 - Volume
- Facial expression
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Relative position

Written

Non-verbal game(s)

Active Listening

- Non-judgement and empathetic
- Open
- Eye-contact
- Open body posture
- Mirroring tone, body posture
- Focus (location)
- Encouragements - verbal and non (nodding)
- Mirror - words. Repeat words. Rephrase ideas. Name emotions.
- Ask clarifying questions
- Open-ended questions

<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

1. Pay Attention
2. Show that you're listening
3. Provide feedback
4. Defer Judgement
5. Respond Appropriately

Activity: Pair up and share something

Giving Feedback

- Timely
- Specific
- Strengths-based
- Constructive
- Realistic
- Person receptive (you can ask)
- Own (I statements)
- Options
- Check-in (was that helpful)
- When is this about us.

Receiving Feedback

- Openness
- Curiosity
- You can share if you aren't ready for feedback
- Gift
- Wait until end
- Consider
- Clarify if needed (What did you like about it?)
- Reflect