Effective Communication Skills

Your ability to communicate greatly affects the success of your relationships. Communicating effectively can help you solve problems, accomplish goals, and settle conflicts. The following are simple steps that you can take to improve your skills in effective communication.

Active listening is one of the most important tools for effective communication. A crucial component of active listening is letting the other person know that he or she has been heard and understood.

Active listening occurs when you:

Take turns when talking.
Listen to each other without interrupting.
Nod and make eye contact.

Paraphrasing helps make it clear to the other person that his or her message has been received.

When paraphrasing, it can help to begin with a phrase like, "I hear you saying that..."

Reflecting the other person's feelings acknowledges their emotional state.

A simple template for reflecting another person's feelings may look like, "It seems like you felt (insert feeling) because (insert reason behind feelings)."

Ask for clarification in a curious, non accusatory way to show interest and attention to the other person's experience.

For example:

"I want to understand. Did you feel frustrated by how the situation unfolded? What would have helped?"

Ask for more information to show your interest in—and attention to—the other person's experience.

For example:

"Would you feel comfortable sharing more about what you're experiencing so I can understand and maybe even help?"

Being curious involves inquiring about the story behind the other person's opinions, feelings, and reactions. Your curiosity demonstrates that you value their experiences.

For example:

"You mentioned _____ and I'm curious to learn more about this. Do you feel comfortable sharing more about your experience?"

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