

Listening Skills

- ✓ Avoid interrupting the other speaker or simply biding your time until it's your turn to speak.
- ✓ Be empathic by putting yourself in the other's shoes and imagining how you might feel.
- ✓ Use reflective statements that begin with "I hear you saying..." to convey understanding.

KEEP IN MIND

Conflict and disagreement are inevitable in life, but communication is possible no matter what the circumstance. Every day provides new situations to practice our communication skills. Consider engaging a life coach or counselor for guidance on next steps.

What steps will you take today to start using highly effective communication skills?



Communication Skills
Health & Wellness

Communication Skills

Do you hear what I'm saying?

Imagine for a moment how much more productive and satisfying life may be through the use of communication skills and approaches that open doors, remove barriers and give life to new ideas.

Communication happens all around us, and it's more than mere words. Communication comprises the messages and signals we send to others as well as the ones we receive. Our verbal words are only a small percentage of the message that's communicated.

Our nonverbal signals, such as tone, eye contact, and body language make up the rest.

Every day is an opportunity to improve our verbal and nonverbal skills. When we interact with our families, friends, coworkers, and even strangers, we encounter values and opinions different from our own. How we react and respond to these differences can make all the difference.

HELP FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

No one is exempt from conflict, and all relationships will experience disagreement. Improving your communication skills will help you navigate through a potentially challenging conversation.

- **Avoid being passive-aggressive** – Avoid using a third person as a messenger, ignoring the other person or using sarcasm or insults as these strategies intensify conflict.
- **Practice self-awareness** – Consider why you feel the way you do. If you aren't aware of your own emotions and opinions, you won't be

able to communicate them with confidence and clarity.

- **Grow from criticism** – Instead of reacting with anger, listen to what they are saying, and consider their feelings. Weigh the information, and then decide if you should accept or ignore it.
- **Take a break** – It's important to stay calm and use our best thinking when we talk. Taking a quick "time out" to cool down can help us respond neutrally rather than react aggressively.
- **Ask for help** – Having a mediator or therapist can help each person feel heard, and the presence of this third party can also keep emotions from escalating.

ACTION STEPS

The following guidelines will help you improve your verbal, nonverbal, and listening skills:

Verbal Communication

- ✓ Stay current and avoid bringing up past wrongs or grievances in a conversation.
- ✓ Use statements that start with "I" instead of "you"; this decreases defensiveness in others.
- ✓ Avoid trigger words such as "always" and "never" as they are accusatory.

Nonverbal Communication

- ✓ Make eye contact as it conveys sincerity and others will be more likely to listen.
- ✓ Consider cultural differences; in some cultures it's best to avoid direct eye contact.
- ✓ Your words, facial expressions, tone and gestures should all be sending the same message.