

Free Tips

13 Rules for Effective Communication

11. Don't Use Threats

Threats can be detrimental to your relationship. You will have an instinctive tendency to use them when you feel hopeless, frustrated, or backed into a corner. Nevertheless, avoid threats at all costs. Call for a time-out, bite your tongue, but don't use threats. Threats are identified by the key word if:

- "If you don't stop nagging, I'll."
- "If you ever do that again, I'll."

Threats should be considered extreme measures that don't solve conflicts.

12. Be Affirming

Thank the other person for listening intently. But be sincere! Work very hard at keeping your communication positive. Even when you disagree with what your partner is sharing, you can still thank him or her for communicating thoughts and feelings. You can thank your partner for sticking with the conversation rather than isolating or withdrawing. Someone once told us, "It takes ten positives to balance out one negative," and we have found this to be true. Force yourself to communicate in affirming ways.

13. Don't Use the Statement "You Broke the Rule"

These rules are designed to protect your relationship. Be careful not to use them to beat up or criticize each other. Rather than say, "You broke a rule," it is better to say something like this:

- "I felt hurt when you called me irresponsible."
- "I felt belittled when you told me I wasn't smart enough to understand that concept."
- "I felt defensive when you told me that I never cared about anyone but myself."

"You broke the rule" has a way of shaming the other person because it is a "you" statement rather than an "I" statement. It would be better to say, "I would like us to work as hard as we can to follow our rules. I feel that it really hurts us when we don't."

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13 Rules for Effective Communication

From the book "Let Love Change Your Life" by Roger and Becky Tirabassi

1. **Don't Use the Words Never and Always**

These words are used when you are frustrated or irritated, but they cause the other person to feel unfairly accused. When you use these words, you are usually exaggerating and not communicating precisely. Using the words never and always may communicate your frustration, but will hurt the other person by creating defensiveness.

2. **Don't Blame, Shame, or Call Names**

When you feel frustrated, hurt, or angry, you are tempted to strike back. You want the other person to feel what you are feeling. If you can blame or shame the other person, you think you will achieve a degree of satisfaction. But blaming and shaming statements cause both parties to feel miserable and will ultimately hurt the relationship.

3. **Use "I" Statements Rather Than "You" Statements**

It is much easier to hear someone say, "I'm feeling frustrated," than to hear him or her say, "You frustrate me!" "You" statements cause people to feel blamed or accused. They can no longer listen with empathy because their attention is focused on defending themselves. Therefore, "you" statements are counterproductive to healthy, effective communication efforts.

4. **Say, "I am Hurt," Rather Than, "I Am Angry or Mad"**

To increase your intimacy and decrease your aggression, you will want to reduce the number of times you use the words angry and mad. After you have been hurt in some way or another, it is a natural reaction to become angry. But more often than not, your hurt is your primary or root emotion. To communicate most effectively, you will want to express that root emotion. When you become frustrated, irritated, jealous, or hurt in some way, share those feelings rather than say that you are angry. When hurt is expressed, it leads to healing. But anger begets anger! Therefore, it is best to share your hurt rather than your anger.

5. **Take a Time-Out**

If you become angry to the point of losing control or teetering on the edge of saying something purposely hurtful, we recommend that you call for a time-out. This technique protects your relationship from deteriorating further.

6. **Don't Withdraw or Isolate**

When you withdraw or isolate, you hurt the other person. You create a situation where the other person feels ignored, cut off, or abandoned. Withdrawing can be perceived as a way to punish the other person. If you need to withdraw to stay in control of yourself, take a time-out.

7. **Repeat to the Person What He or She Said to You Before You Share Your Thoughts, Feelings, or Possible Solutions**

This process involves intentionally listening for the thoughts and feelings of your partner and then repeating them before sharing your thoughts and feelings. Acknowledging what the other person has shared is essential. First, it lets the other person know that you are listening intently, and he or she feels cared for. Second, it provides a way to check on the accuracy of what you heard. It keeps communication clear.

8. **Don't Interrupt**

Give the other person a chance to share. Interrupt only if you need to ask a question to better understand what is being said. It is especially difficult not to interrupt when you hear your partner saying things that hurt you. Your natural tendency is to defend yourself. You may need to bite your tongue to keep from interrupting during these times, but forgo the temptation. You will need to tell yourself that you, too, will get a chance to share your feelings and thoughts, but you must wait until the other person is finished.

9. **Don't Demand**

Rather than demand, ask! Demanding usually results in the other person's feeling controlled. Since most of us felt controlled by our parents as children, we don't respond well to demands. Demands can send shivers up our spines or even worse! It is much more effective to ask a question of the other person than to make demands. For example, ask, "Do you think you could.?" or "Would you be willing to.?"

10. **Use the Phrase "I Would Like." Rather Than "I Need"**

Rather than say, "I need you to listen to me!" say, "I would like it very much if you would listen to me." To say, "I need," is to sound more demanding of a person. Though you may have a legitimate need, it is still better to communicate with a statement of desire.