



Work/Life Services Newsletter October 2019
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Become a Communication Pro

Being an effective communicator doesn't just involve good speaking skills; it also involves active listening. In order to communicate better in all areas of your life, use the following tips to help you develop your abilities and connect with others more effectively.

In the office setting, you can be a more effective communicator with fellow employees by:

- Showing people they can trust you by not embarrassing anyone.
- Avoiding judgment and sticking to the facts.
- Giving praise and feedback regularly.
- Asking for clarity when you're confused: "I want to make sure I've understood you correctly. Do you have an example of what you're speaking about?"
- Restating the person's point to check for understanding: "What I've heard you say is that you're..."
- Use body language to show you're listening (eye contact, nodding your head, etc.).

Ask for Responses

It's important to leave time and space available so that you can allow others to share. By asking for others' opinions and thoughts, you'll show that you care about their feelings. As a result, colleagues and others may come to you more often about concerns or ideas. Ask the following questions to show your interest:

- "What do you think about that?"
- "Was that easy to understand?"
- "Do you feel ok about this?"

Communication Basics

Whether you're communicating one-on-one or within a group, use the following tips:

- Try not to make assumptions around what the other person already knows. Make sure the person knows all the information and has a basic understanding of what you are speaking of.
- Use appropriate language when speaking to another person. The person you are speaking to will have a unique background, skill set, age, and level of experience. Try to make it so he or she can best understand you by using clear, direct language that takes these characteristics into consideration.
- Pick a quiet and appropriate place to converse. If the conversation is about a personal matter, make sure the place is private. Consider Non-Verbal Cues.

When you're speaking to someone, it's not just your words that they are observing. Think about the messages you are sending through tone of voice and body language:

Tone of voice:

- Does your voice sound urgent or hesitant?
- Do you sound nervous or are you stammering?
- Do you sound light-hearted or belligerent?

Body language:

- Are you making eye contact?
- Are your arms folded?
- Are you leaning forward aggressively or looking relaxed?

If your body language and tone of voice send a different message than your words, try to find out why. Are you really saying what you mean?

Active Listening:

- Respond to the person who is talking by giving active feedback like, "Uh-huh," or "Please, go on."
- A small nod of your head while a person is talking also reaffirms that you are listening.

Practice the tips above to help develop your listening and speaking skills. Communication skills take time and practice, but the more you work at it, the more effective you'll be.