



Effective Communication

Communicating effectively is just as important in your personal life as it is in your professional life. In fact, how you communicate can have a significant impact on all areas of life.

What you can do

■ Practice Active Listening

Active listening occurs when you make mental notes of key points when someone is speaking to you. When others are speaking, try to think about the exact words they are saying. Using this strategy may increase your ability to comprehend and remember more of the conversation and allow you to respond more effectively. If you find yourself struggling with how to actively listen, think about the ways in which you want to be listened to.

■ Paraphrase

Communicating with someone else is not always clear and simple. Instead, it can be downright difficult. Paraphrasing can help ensure that what is being stated by one person is being correctly understood by the other person. To paraphrase:

- 1) Wait until the other person has finished talking.
- 2) Reply with "Let me make sure I understand what you said."
- 3) Briefly summarize what the other person said in your own words.

■ Written Communication

With notes or emails, you might be able to pick-up some non-verbal messages, but not as much as if you were hearing and seeing a person. Because of this, it can be very easy to miss the intent of a written message or draw incorrect conclusions. When in doubt about the intent of a message, stop, check out your thoughts, and if appropriate, ask the writer about their intent before you respond. If responding via email, allow time to review what you have written. Make sure your tone accurately conveys the intended message.

■ Speech and Body Language.

Take note of how you think you come across when speaking. It may be helpful to video yourself during a presentation or ask a bystander to take note. Are you speaking clearly? Do you maintain eye contact? Are your arms crossed or gesturing? Do you sound bored or energetic? Write down specific things that you want to improve along with specific actions for improvement. For example, perhaps you find yourself speaking without much emotion. An action for improvement may include focusing on inflection while reading written documents out loud, or reading to your children at night.

■ Choosing Your Timing

With effective communication, timing is almost as important as the words used. The problem is that waiting until the other person seems approachable isn't always possible. If you need to talk at a time when they are obviously distracted or thinking about something else, try this: Ask them for their full attention. Explain the importance of what you need to say to them, and hit on the main points while summarizing the details. If applicable, leave them with a written note or summary of what you touched on.

For more communication tips and information, visit the website or call the toll free number listed below.



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