

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATING

The first thing to remember is that each situation needs to be assessed on its merits. That is, there are not really any “right” or “wrong” ways of communicating as different situations require different approaches. Taking this into account, however, there are a number of relatively simple strategies that will help you communicate more effectively more often in more situations.

1. **Keep calm** – if you are relaxed and can avoid becoming distressed you will be in a better position to hear what the other person is saying, as well as to say what you want to say.
2. **Think very carefully about what you want to say and be as specific as possible.** You will find this easiest if you refer mostly to actual behaviours. That is, what did you, or the other person, actually DO? What do you want the other person to do?
3. **Don't forget to listen** – effective communication is a two-way process. As well as you expressing yourself you will be more successful if you can also listen to what the other person is trying to say.
4. Remember that not everyone always agrees about the way things *should* be done or about the way things *should* be. As such, rather than saying something like “this is how it should be...”, it is usually best to express your needs by using statements such as “**I want...**” or “**I would like...**”. If this is followed by a description of a specific behaviour (see point 2) then the person receiving the message should be clear about what your needs are.
5. Similarly, it is useful to include statements that accurately describe **how you feel**. While doing so, it is important not to blame the other person by saying things like “you make me feel...”. Rather, it is less confrontational, and more realistic (given that ultimately you are in control of your own emotions) to phrase it something like “when you did ...I felt ...”.

6. **Chose your time carefully** – particularly if you are discussing an issue that is complex and/or potentially distressing, timing is of the essence. Ideally, try to find a time that will suit all involved, and not necessarily a time when you will feel rushed, be too tired or when distractions and interruptions will interfere with your discussion.
7. **Be aware of unhelpful thoughts** – and do something about them. Challenge them.
8. **Practice** – run through what you would like to say and how you would like to say it in your mind. Even better, say it out aloud. Even better still, practice in front of a friend or relative and ask them for feedback. Don't forget, practice makes better.