

## Effective Communication

- Take responsibility for getting your needs met in the relationship. Stay focused. If the other person has important topics of their own, often it works best to take turns, focusing on one topic at a time, rather than mixing them together.
- Do not use communication to produce a particular response in the other person. Communicate for yourself. Do not use communication of your needs to fix, change, manipulate, or convince another person.
- Always communicate with kindness. Even anger can be communicated kindly. Be careful of your language and avoid language or tones that find fault with the other person, exaggerate the problems or create defensiveness in the other. When you encounter defensiveness, it may be wise to walk away and plan to return at a later time. Usually you just can't "plow through" someone else's defensiveness.
- Always come back to your own experiences – emotions, bodily sensations, hopes – rather than talking about the other person's actions and your opinions about them.
- Stay in touch with your deeper feelings and wants. Be clear about the purpose of communication. Do you just want to be heard? Is there a particular change you want in the relationship?
- Take responsibility for your own experiences and never blame the other person for your experience.
- Be mindful of your own experience when communicating. Notice your emotional and physical reactions to your communication.
- Sort out your key points in advance, sometimes it even is appropriate to write down key points.
- When solving problems, establish the facts and try to avoid the emotional undertones.
- Take responsibility for your own poor behavior or the impact your behavior has on the other person. Be quick to apologize for things you have really done wrong, intentionally or unintentionally. Be slow to apologize if you are using it just to end the conversation or if you have established apologizing as a "bad habit". Apologizing is important but must be genuine.
- Take time. Sometimes you both must just walk the road a little longer to find the solution. Taking times allows for increased understanding of the other person and the issues. Sometimes the solution can be revealed just a little further down the road.
- Use communication and conflict to understand yourself and the other person at a deeper level. Sometimes the specific problem can't be resolved, but understanding, as a goal, can always be improved.
- Notice the damage that comes when you cling to your own desires and opinions and choose the better path – increased love and understanding in the relationship and in yourself.
- Always communicate with respect. If you can't speak with respect, don't speak. Wait until emotions have cooled and you can speak respectfully.
- Keep working at it.