

Effective Communication Skills

Developing effective communication skills is crucial to maintaining good personal and professional relationships. Practicing these essential skills outside of conflict can help improve your communication during more difficult conversations and conflict situations.

Active Listening and Summarization

Active listening is listening with your mind, body, and heart. There are two components: listening to understand and accurately summarizing the speaker's feelings and concerns.

Listen to understand:

- What do they want?
- Why do they want it?
- How do they feel about it?

Summarize:

- Key points and major ideas expressed, *including feelings*, in the speaker's own words.
- Be concise; omit the details and bring down to "bottom line."
- Refrain from adding any commentary, giving advice, or asking questions.
- Ask the speaker if you "got it."

Assertive Speaking

Assertive speaking is a tool for clearly communicating your feelings around one present conflict in a positive, non-threatening way.

Using I-Messages

I-messages are useful for starting a difficult conversation by concisely stating how you feel, when something happens, and why you feel that way.

I FEEL...	Describe how you feel with one feeling word.
WHEN...	State the problem, behavior or language (Non-judgmental description—as a video camera would show it.)
BECAUSE...	State why the particular behavior produces the particular feeling <u>in you</u>.

Example:

I FEEL frustrated
WHEN you speak while I'm speaking
BECAUSE what I'm saying is important and I need to be certain that you heard it.

Questions

Asking positive, genuine questions can help you move past conflicting positions and uncover mutual interests. Questions can help:

- Understand someone's point of view
- Clarify miscommunications
- Gather more information
- Uncover interests and motivations

Open-Ended Questions:

Use open-ended questions to help an individual open up or to elicit more information. They typically begin with *what, where, who, why, and how*.

- Can you talk more about why you feel that way?
- How did you come to this conclusion?
- What is most important to you about this?
- What do you mean when you say ____?

Closed-Ended Questions:

Use closed-ended questions to gain specific information or clarify what has been said. They typically begin with *is, do, are, should, could, and would*, and can be answered with a short “yes” or “no.”

- I heard you say _____, is that correct?
- Would you be willing to ____?

About the Conflict Resolution Program

The Conflict Resolution Program (CRP), part of the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) is a resource dedicated to supporting transformational and organizational change in nonprofit, public, government, and educational settings. This is done primarily through teaching and promoting effective communication, collaborative problem-solving, and conflict resolution.

To learn more about our work, visit

<https://www.bidenschool.udel.edu/ipa/serving-delaware/crp>



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