

# COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

## Skills to Improve Understanding and Connection

Effective communication involves both expressing yourself clearly and truly understanding others. Many common communication habits—such as interrupting, avoiding conflict, or focusing on what to say next—can create misunderstandings and emotional distance.

With practice, these skills can help strengthen relationships, reduce conflict, and increase feelings of being heard and understood.

### Communication Styles: Finding Balance

People often communicate in different ways depending on the situation. Three common styles include:

- **Passive Communication:**
  - Prioritizing others' needs while minimizing or ignoring your own. This can lead to feeling unheard or taken advantage of.
- **Aggressive Communication:**
  - Expressing your needs in a way that disregards others. This may involve criticism, intensity, or control, often leading to conflict.
- **Assertive Communication (Goal):**
  - A balanced approach where you clearly express your needs while also respecting the needs of others. This supports healthier, more effective interactions.

### Using “I” Statements

“I” statements help you communicate feelings without placing blame, which can reduce defensiveness and improve understanding.

Structure:

- *I feel...*
- *When...*
- *Because...*
- *(Optional) I would like...*

Example:

- *“I feel overwhelmed when plans change last minute because I like having structure. I would appreciate more notice when possible.”*

“I” statements allow you to take ownership of your experience while clearly expressing your needs.

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### Reflections (Active Listening Skill)

Reflection involves restating what someone has shared in your own words to show understanding.

Why it helps:

- Confirms you are listening
- Validates the speaker's experience
- Encourages deeper sharing

Examples:

- "It sounds like you've been feeling really stressed and stretched thin."
- "You're frustrated because it feels like your effort isn't being recognized."

Focus on both content and emotion, not just the words.

### Additional Communication Strategies

- Ask open-ended questions:
  - Encourage more meaningful responses
    - "Can you tell me more about that?"
    - "What was that like for you?"
- Be present:
  - Give your full attention—avoid distractions and focus on both verbal and nonverbal cues.
- Avoid mind-reading expectations:
  - Others may not automatically understand your thoughts or feelings—clear communication is important.
- Monitor tone and delivery:
  - How something is said can be just as important as what is said.
- Allow space for both perspectives:
  - Effective communication involves both sharing and listening.
- Set intentional time for conversations when needed:
  - Especially for more meaningful or sensitive topics, choose a calm and distraction-free setting.

### Practice Reflection

Before responding in a conversation, consider:

- What am I feeling right now?
- What is my goal in this conversation?
- Am I listening to understand, or to respond?
- How can I communicate this clearly and respectfully?