



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TO SOLIDIFY CONNECTIONS

Building **good social connections** and **social support** depends on being able to communicate effectively with those around us.

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

Effective communication refers to our ability to interact with others in a way that accurately represents our feelings and thoughts. This also involves conscious listening and being understanding of others' feelings, opinions and ideas.

WHEN TO USE THIS?

The following tips and strategies can be used in different situations with peers, colleagues, family, friends, and others.

WHEN EXPRESSING YOURSELF...

USE I STATEMENTS

Ensure that you communicate your perspective effectively and highlight your own needs, thoughts, and feelings. This helps you structure your own thoughts in a more organized way and promotes positive communication.



EXAMPLE

Instead of saying, "you make me really angry", try saying something like, "I feel really angry when..."

TAKE SOME TIME TO REST

Expressing your feelings when you are hurt or angry might make it difficult to effectively communicate how you feel. Allow yourself some time to reflect on the situation so you can express yourself in a calmer way.



SANDWICH A NEGATIVE BETWEEN TWO POSITIVES

This is a helpful approach when delivering information which may inconvenience the other person. Start with a positive statement, followed by the issue you want to address, and end with some appreciative words.



EXAMPLE: A group member is slacking on work. You can say, "Your contribution to the group is amazing because you really know how to prepare a high quality PowerPoint! However, I found that you haven't been contributing to the group as much this week, and this is a problem that we need to address. I know that we'll be able to work something out, because you're always willing to problem solve."

TURN VENTING INTO PROBLEM SOLVING

After a difficult encounter or situation, the first thing you might want to do is blow off steam by venting. Adopt a problem solving approach and explain the situation with clarity, then focus on what can be done to resolve the issue.



WHEN LISTENING TO OTHERS

The following key elements and associated strategies will help you listen to others in an active and engaged manner.



BODY LANGUAGE

Non-verbal cues communicate you're listening and interested in what others are saying

Try to maintain eye contact and nod your head as the other person is expressing themselves.

UNDERSTANDING

You might not agree with what the other person is saying; however, it's important not to take it personally and try to understand their perspective.

Take some time to reflect before reacting.

Rephrase and repeat what you have been told back to the speaker to ensure you understood correctly.

ATTENTION

Paying attention when others are talking lets them know that you are fully invested in what they have to say.

Focus your attention on what the person is saying, i.e., avoid looking at your phone when you are listening to someone.

EMPATHY

This refers to our ability to examine the situation from the other person's perspective.

Be considerate and sensitive to what the other person is trying to communicate.

INTERACTING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Sometimes in social networking, you will encounter people who are very difficult. People react in different ways when interacting with a difficult person; some avoid them, some argue with them, and others are actually nicer to them in order to encourage their kindness as well. However, these are often ineffective in moving the situation forward.

Instead, practice implementing the tips and strategies provided in this resource to be ready for such situations.

- 1 Listen actively. Validate their experiences and the genuineness of their feelings.
- 2 Address the issues upfront in a calm manner to facilitate positive and constructive discussions.
- 3 Say no when necessary. It is okay to say no when you don't have time to complete certain tasks.



If you don't feel comfortable just saying no, you can always provide an alternative solution, e.g., if a group member for a project tells you that you need to have your part done by a certain date, provide a reasonable alternative date and time



For a **complete list of references** check out the Reference List page at www.engineeringresilience.ca

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