

# Communication

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## Resilience Empowerment Compassion



### What is Communication?

Communication is a skill that we learn in order to convey information. Words, tone of voice, sign and body language all send messages and meanings. From infancy we learn to speak, listen and understand both verbal and nonverbal messages.

#### Some Communication Facts

- Meaningful relationships develop through clear and direct communication.
- Trust between people grows through honest expression.
- Choose your words carefully. What we say and how we say it are equally as important.
- Choosing an appropriate time and place for serious conversation is wise.
- Agreement is not a requirement of good communication.
- Poor communication can lead to misunderstanding and conflict.
- Communication skills improve with practice, regardless of a person's age.
- How we communicate varies from culture to culture.
- It is important to assume responsibility for all of your communication.

### Enhance Your Communication

- Listen actively and let the speaker know you are interested in their message.
- Ensure that your words, tone of voice and body language all send the same message.
- Speak without blame and defensiveness. Healthy conflict can deepen relationships.
- Explain what you mean clearly. Don't assume the listener knows what you are thinking.
- Practice your communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal.

#### Always try to:

- Listen attentively when others are speaking and try not to interrupt constantly.
- Do as much listening as you do talking. Rephrasing what others have said indicates that you are paying attention.
- Use "I" in your sentences instead of "you". "You" tends to put your listener on the defensive and limits dialogue.
- Be culturally sensitive. Direct eye contact, for example, demonstrates honesty in one culture but is invasive in another.
- Stay on topic.
- Ask for clarification instead of jumping to conclusions.
- Be honest. Communication isn't a competition and often there are many sides to a story.

### Good communication:

- reduces tension
- lessens defensiveness
- eliminates blame
- builds relationships
- escapes a negative competitive cycle
- avoids exaggerations such as 'always' and 'never'
- utilizes time outs to diffuse unconstructive exchanges
- maintains integrity of self and other

#### Practice Exercise for Enhanced Communication

The purpose of this exercise is to practice developing good communication skills and to deepen respect and understanding of the differences and similarities in our conversational styles.

Choose a topic. One person speaks for 3-5 minutes, without interruption. There is no blaming or criticizing. Use "I" statements. Afterwards, the listener repeats what the first speaker had said, without adding any additional comments. Seek understanding between what was spoken and what was heard. Reverse roles and repeat the exercise.

#### We Can Help.

The Employee Assistance Program can:

- conduct individual, couple and family counselling
- help with communication skill building
- provide mediation or coaching services

### Resources

#### Suggested Reading

- Why Marriages Succeed or Fail. John Gottman
- I Only Say This Because I Love You: Talking To Your Parents, Partner, Sibs and Kids When You're All Adults. Deborah Tannen
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families. Stephen Covey

#### Websites and Programs

- Family Communication. Mr Rogers' Neighbourhood. [www.fci.org/index.asp](http://www.fci.org/index.asp)
- American Association of Psychologists [www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=6](http://www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=6)
- The Seven Challenges Workbook [www.newconversations.net/communication\\_skills\\_workbook\\_summary\\_and\\_toc.htm](http://www.newconversations.net/communication_skills_workbook_summary_and_toc.htm)

#### Employee Assistance Program

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