

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN RELATIONSHIPS- I

Effective communication is the lifeblood of creating healthy and thriving relationships. It serves to strengthen the foundation of your relationships - both platonic and romantic, and fosters deeper understanding, connections, and emotional intimacy.

Just like any dance form, effective communication requires effort, rhythm, proper steps, and most importantly, coordination to create a harmonious relationship.

Before we dive into enhancing communication in your relationships, take some time to understand your communication style.

Take a moment to reflect on your current communication patterns and answer the following questions!



- **How would you describe your overall communication style?** Are you usually assertive, passive, or aggressive?

- **How does this style show up in your relationships?** Does it make your relationship seem like a battleground or a space where you and your loved one aren't able to express freely and understand each other?

For example, if you have a passive communication style, do you end up not communicating your feelings and end up feeling frustrated when your loved one isn't able to understand you?



- **Do you find it challenging to express your thoughts and feelings to others?** If yes, what are some challenges you face while trying to express yourself? If not, what are some things that act as enablers to help you communicate smoothly? For example, an enabler for you could be your loved one being open to hearing your side of the story.

- **How well do you listen to others?** Are you actively engaged in conversations, or do you tend to lose focus easily?

- **How often do you try to empathise when communicating with others consciously?** Do you genuinely try to understand their perspective?





Understanding your communication style is an important step to improving your overall communication in relationships. **Reflecting on how you express and engage yourself in conversations can highlight your strengths and areas for growth.** And just like speaking, listening is also an important part of communicating effectively.

Now that you have a better idea about your communication style let's move towards the next step of enhancing communication.

Practise Active Listening!



Active listening is all about being fully present during conversations. It involves being open to hearing and understanding different perspectives, and making the other person feel heard. This makes it essential to respond in a way that shows empathy and understanding. Active listening can help you fuel a thriving relationship where both you and your loved one communicate respectfully and listen to each other intentionally. This will also help you give each other a safe space to express yourself, feel heard and supported while acting as a united front.

Tips for Active Listening and Empathetic Communication:

- Maintain eye contact to show that you are being attentive, and are connected with them throughout the conversation.
- Use verbal cues like "mm-hmm" and nonverbal cues like nodding and leaning forward/backward to indicate understanding and engagement.
- Reflect on what the speaker said and summarise their thoughts and feelings to assure them that you understand them. For example, if your loved one is talking about a stressful situation, you can acknowledge their feelings by telling them that the situation does sound distressing.
- Ask follow-up questions for clarification or to encourage further exploration of a topic.
- Avoid distractions such as using your phone while your loved one is speaking.
- Don't interrupt or interject by sharing your own thoughts while the speaker is sharing.
- Try to imagine yourself in the speaker's position to empathise with them and understand their perspective.
- Show genuine care and support through non-verbal cues such as a comforting touch or a reassuring smile.

mmm...



You can also just listen without providing any advice to your loved ones. Sometimes, all they need is to feel heard.



Here's how you can validate their emotions and acknowledge their feelings:

- Thank you for sharing that with me. It must be hard to talk about it.
- I hear you. How can I support you? - Please tell me what you need.
- You can cry and feel what you need. I am here to support you.
- I am sorry that you are going through this. You have the right to be upset.
- What you're feeling is completely understandable. Your emotions are valid.
- I am sure this might have been too much to take in.



Equipped with the basic tips to keep in mind while communicating with your loved ones?

You're all set to step into the ground and put these active listening tips into action!

P.S. We know these conversations can be difficult at first, but you can do it! We're rooting for you :)

If you, or someone you know is looking to seek professional help, reach out to us at **The Mood Space** <https://www.themoodspace.com/getstarted> and our Care Team will get back to you within 24 hours.

Not looking for professional help just yet? We understand, keep browsing through our Care Space tools and explore our self-help handouts and worksheets to navigate mental health-related challenges in a better manner.

