

Top 10 Critical Communication Skills for Couples

Communication is the cornerstone of any relationship. As John Powell says "**Communication works for those who work at it**". Learning more skills to increase the quality of the communication within your relationships is guaranteed to improve them.

Unfortunately, interpersonal communication skills are rarely taught in school. We learn most of our communication skills through the experiences and relationships we have in life.

The great news is that we can learn and improve our skills in part of our lives, and that includes communication skills

Enhance your communication skills and your relationship with these strategies:

- 1. Focus on the specific behaviour, rather than the person.** Address the other person's behaviour or words. It's much more agreeable when someone says, "It hurts my feelings when you don't listen to me" instead of "Why do you have to be so rude all of the time and ignore me?"
 - When you attack the other person, they become defensive. When people are defensive, unproductive fighting and arguments are the common result.
 - You're interested in changing the other person's behaviour. You can't change who they are. Focus on the behaviour.
- 2. Find the right time.** If your partner comes home from work and slams the door, it might not be the best time to share your displeasure over the dirty dishes in the sink. Pick a time when everyone is calm and there are few distractions.
- 3. Be clear and assertive.** It's unfair and unproductive to expect others to read your mind. Be bold enough to be open. Your happiness is as much your responsibility as it is anyone else's. Let your partner know how they can fulfill your needs. If something is bothering you, share that information.
- 4. Be willing to compromise.** Compromising means that both of you give something up. All relationships require compromise.



5. **Consider the other person's point of view.** Strive to be empathetic. Take a walk in the other person's shoes. You might realise that you're being unreasonable.
6. **Create a safe environment.** Be receptive to the concerns of your partner. When you react poorly, your partner will be less likely to communicate the next time. Create an environment that permits sharing without punishment. Be grateful when your partner is willing to speak up.
7. **Make sure you listen more than you speak.** Communication is mostly about listening. You learn so much when you really listen to someone else! When you focus on what they're saying, make sure you clear the chatter going on in your head. It's more important to receive the whole message from the person you're listening to than to think of what you're going to say next. When you're focusing on your own thoughts, you will miss valuable clues and messages from the other person.
8. **Avoid giving in just to keep the peace.** While that solution works in the short-term, your feelings are unlikely to change. The issue will still be there, only there will be resentment, too. Your own happiness is at stake. Avoiding conflict will only make you feel better today. Your grief will return in the future, with interest.
9. **Let go of the past.** Everyone makes mistakes. Harping on the past only stirs up old wounds. Keep your attention on today and the future. You've already had the same conversation many times. Draw a line in the sand and resolve to release old hurts right there. If you don't you will keep getting the same result. As Albert Einstein said: *"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"*.
10. **Avoid assumptions.** Many communication problems are the result of poor assumptions. Seek clarity. Ensure you understand the situation before proceeding. It might just be a simple misunderstanding. An inaccurate assumption can be the starting point of another disagreement.

Effective and kind communication is pivotal in all relationships. **Communication skills can make or break a relationship.** Keep the lines of communication open by maintaining an environment that welcomes open dialogue. Avoiding the situation only postpones the problem. Be assertive and share your concerns.

Take responsibility for the quality of your relationship by strengthening your communication skills. You'll like the results!

