

# The key to healthy relationships is communication

**The foundation to any healthy relationship is strong communication. Learn to improve your connections with others by following these simple tips.**

## DON'T HOLD BACK HOW YOU FEEL

Be brave to share how you feel. Discussing your feelings and needs can feel difficult and challenging, perhaps even scary. However, people can only begin to understand you, and what is going on for you at a deep level if you share your feelings with them.

thinking  
of you!



So go ahead and express yourself. When you don't want to talk, use a journal to explore the feelings that you have trouble communicating. This will give you some time to reflect until you are ready to talk about it.

## BUILD TRUST

Trust is the safe feeling that enables you to be vulnerable with another person, without fear of judgment, abandonment, or betrayal. Trust is not something we can easily do when our trust has been broken. Negative life experiences and events of the past, left undealt with and unresolved can impact on our ability to trust.

Trust can be re-built with the support of healthy relationships. When someone expresses a need for emotional connection or support, during disagreements, and when discussing a conflict from the past. Listening deeply to your friend, family member, or partner during these moments can pave the way for trust to build, enabling you both to be more open and supportive of one another.



## LISTENING DEEPLY

One of the best ways you can show your friends, family, or partner how much you care is to listen to them with an open mind and open heart and your full attention. Turn off the television and remove distractions. Make eye contact and try to hear what the person is saying, without letting your own judgments get in the way.

A big tip for listening deeply is to not think that you know what the person is going to say or is saying, wait till they finish expressing before you jump in or come to your own conclusion of what they are trying to say. Doing this gives you the space to truly hear and gives them the space to fully express. Allowing and giving another the space to fully express builds trust and safety in a relationship.

You need to develop the ability to put your own agenda and reality on hold whilst you listen to the other persons reality. Once you understand the other persons reality and are on the same page as them, you can then express your reality and how it impacts you.

## What happens if another expresses something that brings up a hurt or reaction in you?

Tip: that is okay, this can happen, as the saying goes there are two sides to every story, and often we take ours for granted. Research shows that the way we encode memories can be very inaccurate, so getting into the details of who said what is very unhelpful. Key is to remain open to how the other may have perceived or judged the event/situation/comment or look.

How you express that to them will determine whether they will still be open to sharing with you and hearing what you have to say.



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## BE VULNERABLE

Being vulnerable means expressing and showing your feelings and not keeping them locked up on the inside. Although the idea of being vulnerable—exposing yourself emotionally to another person—may sound frightening, it is the key to healthy and strong relationships.

When we keep ourselves protected, we end up showing a side to ourselves that is not true. For example, when we are feeling scared or frightened and instead of allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and express these feelings, we cover it up and as a result we can come across, angry, frustrated, withdrawn and or irritable.

This can cause conflict between us and others, because in effect, when we need support from another, we may inadvertently push them away because we protect ourselves with emotions that cause others to back off.

Being vulnerable can be scary but it is a window into your soul and opportunity to develop true intimacy by allowing another to see the real and true you – there is nothing more gorgeous, no matter how old you are.

It takes more strength to be vulnerable than it does to be 'strong' and push the feelings away.



"He always reacts to that"

"That is just how they deal with it, they won't change"

"She is just like that, you have to put up with it"

"Best to just leave them alone and not talk about it"

**Trying to ignore things in the hope that they will go away, just makes things worse in the long run.**

Tip: Often when we are anxious about expressing something to another, the way in which we approach the subject can set up the conversation to end in the way that it always has.

Being open to the other person and letting go of the past can support you both in moving forward. If you approach the conversation openly and express how you are feeling before you talk about the issue, it can support in not repeating the behaviour.

For example, saying "I am not sure how to express this and I am anxious about how you are going to react, but I feel we need to have this conversation"

or "I am going to say something and it's probably going to come out wrong, so just let me say it and then we can fix it up together"



## DON'T STEREOTYPE

Often, we are afraid to express to another because we have already constructed how they are going to react in our minds and we are afraid of that perceived reaction. How often do we stereotype people around us and box them into the way "they have always been" without giving them the grace and opportunity to grow.

For example, how often have you said the following to yourself?



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