

Top 10 Critical Communication Skills for Couples.

Communication is the cornerstone of any relationship. **The quality of any relationship is no greater than the quality of the communication.** Increasing the quality of the communication within your relationship might be the best way to enhance it.

Unfortunately, interpersonal communication skills are rarely taught in school. We learn them independently.

If you've never tried to strengthen your communication skills, they're probably not as good as they could be!

Enhance your communication skills and your relationship with these strategies:

1. **Focus on the specific behavior, rather than the person.** Address the other person's behavior 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 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 behavior. You can't change who they are. Focus on the behavior.
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

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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. Talk a walk in the other person's shoes. You might realize 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. **After you speak, listen.** It's not just about getting your point across. You also have a responsibility to listen. You might learn something invaluable. Have you ever learned anything while you were speaking?
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 only 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 conversation 100 times. The next time will have the same result.
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 dialog. Avoiding the situation only postpones the problem. Be assertive and share your concerns.

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