



How can I develop my interpersonal communication skills?

Interpersonal communication skills are integral to many areas of life. Good communication skills can help you develop and improve your personal relationships with family and friends, and are necessary to get ahead in many professions.

Effective communication requires you to both listen to others and express yourself, so improving your skills involves work in both of these areas. It also requires you to understand the messages and meaning behind someone's words (as well as your own).

And while talking and listening sound like pretty basic concepts, doing both effectively can require work and preparation.

There are a number of strategies you can employ to help you be a more effective communicator:

REALLY LISTEN

When someone is talking to you, clear your mind and focus only on what they're saying. Try not to let your mind wander, pre-empt what they're going to say next or think about how you're going to reply. The other person will likely notice and appreciate your engagement and interest.

CONFIRM INFORMATION WHERE NECESSARY

If someone says something to you that requires your input or action, make sure you know exactly what they're saying or asking. Feel free to confirm what they have said, even if it means politely interrupting them.



RECOGNISE EMOTIONS

Try to understand the emotions behind what someone else is saying, and respond appropriately – be sympathetic if they're feeling down or upset, and congratulate them if they've just achieved something important to them. Consider the perspectives of others when you're communicating with them, and the effect what you're saying could have on them.

Likewise, understanding your own emotions when communicating is very important. Learn to recognise when you're becoming stressed, as you're more likely to respond hastily, in a way you may regret later, as well as misinterpret what others are saying. When you start feeling stressed, try to pause or stall the conversation so you can calm down and think about what you want to say. Speak clearly and try to stay relaxed. If necessary, postpone the conversation so everyone has some time to unwind.

BE AWARE OF THE POWER OF BODY LANGUAGE

Body language refers to the nonverbal communication you project – whether consciously or unconsciously – through things like posture, facial expressions and body movements. Using eye contact, looking engaged when someone speaks to you and uncrossing your arms can improve others' perceptions of you and lead to more effective communication.

BE ASSERTIVE

Assertive communication means interacting with other people in a way that is direct and honest, without being aggressive. It also means standing up for yourself and your views without belittling or disrespecting others.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For help developing your interpersonal communication skills, make an appointment with your **Employee Assistance Program**

We would like to thank Centre for Corporate Health (cfch.com.au) for their assistance in the compilation of this factsheet.



The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

Website: cmhaa.org.au

LinkedIn: [Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/corporate-mental-health-alliance-australia)



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