

Ineffective Communication Strategies

1. **INSISTING YOU KNOW THE TRUTH:** Wherein you insist that you are right and the other person is wrong.
2. **BLAMING:** You say that the problem is entirely the other person's fault.
3. **PLAYING THE MARTYR:** You claim that you are an innocent victim who had no part in the problem.
4. **PUTTING THE OTHER PERSON DOWN:** You imply that the other person is a bad person because he or she "always" or "never" does certain things (over-generalization)
5. **ACTING HOPELESS:** You give up and insist that there is no point in trying.
6. **BEING DEMANDING BUT UNCLEAR:** You say you are entitled to better treatment but you refuse to ask for what you want in a direct, straightforward way.
7. **DENIAL:** You insist that you don't feel angry, hurt, or sad when you really do.
8. **BEING PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE:** You take control of the interaction by pouting, withdrawing, or saying nothing. You may storm out of the room or slam doors.
9. **BLAMING YOURSELF:** You insist you're an awful, terrible person, but don't address the problem.
10. **HELPING:** You try to "solve the problem" or "help" the other person, instead of just listening. (The worst vice is advice.)
11. **USING SARCASM:** Your words or tone of voice convey tension or hostility that you aren't openly acknowledging.
12. **SCAPEGOATING THE OTHER PERSON:** You suggest that the other person has "a problem" and that you're sane, happy, and uninvolved in the conflict. (Similar to "blaming" but with an extra helping of self-righteousness.)
13. **ACTING DEFENSIVE:** You refuse to admit any wrong-doing or imperfection and get angry at the other person for suggesting it.
14. **COUNTER-ATTACKING:** Instead of acknowledging how the other person feels, you respond to their criticism by criticizing them.
15. **DIVERTING:** Instead of dealing with how you both feel in the here-and-now, you list grievances about past injustices. (A type of counter-attack.)

Effective Communication Strategies

LISTENING

- 1) **DISARM:** Find some element of truth in what the other person is saying, even if you think they are wrong, irrational, unreasonable, or unfair. (Win by losing; Remember to surrender.)
- 2) **EMPATHIZE:** See the situation through the other person's eyes.
 - a) **UNDERSTAND THEIR THINKING:** Show that you understand how they could feel that way by paraphrasing what they are saying .
 - b) **ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS:** Tell them how you think they probably feel, given what they are saying.
- 3) **INQUIRE:** Ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.

SPEAKING YOUR MIND

- 1) **USE "I FEEL" STATEMENTS:** Express your feelings with "I feel ____." Statements (e.g., "I feel attacked right now."), rather than "You are ____." statements (e.g., "You are wrong!" or "You are making me really mad!")
 - a) **Negative feelings:** "I feel angry." "I feel criticized." "I feel put down." "I feel frustrated." "I feel coerced." "I feel misunderstood."
 - b) **Vulnerable feelings:** "I feel sad." "I feel rejected." "I feel hurt." "I feel unloved." "I feel disappointed." "I feel ignored." "I feel intimidated." "I feel attacked." Or "I feel inadequate."
 - c) **Wishes and desires:** "I would like to spend more time with you." "I want us to work out this problem and feel close to each other." "I really want you to be on time." Or "I would like you to try to understand my point of view."
- 2) **SAY SOMETHING NICE:** Find something genuinely positive to say to the other person, even in the heat of battle. The idea is to let the other person know that you respect them, even if you are mad at them.

Change Your Communication Style

He or she said...	I responded....	Revised Response
<i>Write down what the other person said.</i>	<i>Write down what you said in response. Point out why your statement is self-defeating.</i>	<i>Write down what you could have said instead that would have been more effective.</i>

Reasons People Have Trouble Adopting the Strategies

Attitudes that prevent speaking your mind

1. **CONFLICT PHOBIA** – You are afraid of angry feelings or conflicts with people, and worry that others will not want to be with you if you express your feelings.
2. **EMOTIONAL PERFECTIONISM** – You believe that you shouldn't have irrational feelings like anger, jealousy, depression or anxiety, and that people will not like you if they find out how you really feel.
3. **FEARING DISAPPROVAL AND REJECTION** – You are terrified of rejection or ending up alone, so you avoid anything that would make the other person mad at you. You may also feel like you have to please others and always meet their expectations.
4. **PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE** – You pout and hold your hurt and angry feelings inside instead of sharing them openly and honestly. You give others the silent treatment and try to make them feel guilty.
5. **FEELING HOPELESS** – You are convinced that there is no way your relationship can improve, so you stop trying.
6. **LOW SELF-ESTEEM** – You believe you are not entitled to express your feelings or to ask others for what you want.
7. **NEEDING SPONTANEITY** – You believe you have the right to say whatever you think or feel when you are upset. You may think that to do otherwise is phony.
8. **WANTS OTHERS TO BE MIND READERS** – You think that others should know how you feel and what you want without you having to tell them. You hold your feelings inside and then feel resentful because you think others do not care about you.
9. **MARTYR** – You are afraid to admit that you are angry because you don't want anyone to know they have upset you. You take great pride in controlling your emotions and suffering silently.
10. **PROBLEM SOLVER** – When you have a conflict with someone, you try to solve the problem without consulting the others who are involved, sharing your feelings and finding out about theirs.

Reasons People Have Trouble Adopting the Strategies

Attitudes that prevent listening

1. **YOU THINK YOU KNOW THE TRUTH** – You believe you are right and the other person is wrong. You want to prove your point.
2. **BLAME** – You think the other person is at fault, and that you are innocent.
3. **NEED TO BE A VICTIM** – You feel sorry for yourself and think other people are insensitive and selfish.
4. **SELF-DECEPTION** – You cannot see the impact of your actions on others, so you don't think you are part of the problem.
5. **BEING DEFENSIVE** – You are so afraid of criticism that you can't stand to hear anything negative about yourself. Instead of listening, you try to defend yourself.
6. **FEAR OF COERCION** – You are afraid to give in or let yourself be pushed around. You resist what others say because you think other people are controlling and domineering.
7. **BEING DEMANDING** – You feel entitled to better treatment from others, and get frustrated when you don't get what you feel you deserve. You insist that they have no right to feel and act the way they do, and you resist understanding their motivations.
8. **BEING SELFISH** – You want what you want when you want it, and you throw a tantrum when you don't get it. You don't particularly care what others think or feel.
9. **MISTRUST** – You worry that others will take advantage of you.
10. **OVER-HELPFUL** – You feel the need to help people by giving them suggestions and telling them what to do, when all they want is for you to listen to them.