

Healthy Communication

KEY TO A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

In a healthy relationship, people should feel safe expressing their honest needs and boundaries. Conflicts come up, and it's important to proceed thoughtfully and respectfully. All of us learn both healthy and unhealthy communication habits from others (in our life and in the media) so it's important to give thought to how we interact with others.



REFLECT

Think about a time that you felt like you had a really great conversation with someone. How did that person make you feel? What did they do to make you feel heard, supported, and affirmed? Keep this in mind to consider how you can approach conversations with others.



LISTEN ACTIVELY

It feels good to be listened to and given space to express ourselves, and this is something we can easily do to for others. Give the speaker your undivided attention, don't interrupt them, and give them cues that show you're listening (like nodding, "mmhmm"-ing, and mirroring their tone).



BE ASSERTIVE

This means being direct about our rights and our needs, while still considering the impact on others. This can be challenging but gets easier with practice -- make it your goal to communicate to be understood. Start sentences with "I" to state your feelings and experiences, rather than "You," which can sound like an accusation or attack.



TAKE SPACE, MAKE SPACE

Anger, sadness, and fear are all normal emotions, and you have the right to tell someone if they've harmed you. However, overwhelming emotions can make it difficult for you to express yourself in ways that you'd like to, and could potentially hurt someone else. It's okay to hit pause on a conversation to take care of yourself and plan what you're going to say and how.



BE RESPECTFUL

We all have the right to set boundaries around what we want to share and discuss. If someone doesn't feel ready or comfortable having a conversation, it's okay to see if there's anything that you can do to make the situation more comfortable for them. Talking through "ground rules" or conditions for a conversation may feel weird at first, but it's a good way to get to know someone better and help everyone feel safe.

