

How can I improve my communication with my partner?

KEY WORDS

stonewalling | defensiveness | active listening | empathy



One of the elements that can make or break a relationship is communication – that’s why recognising signs of poor communication is so important.

Red flags include **not listening, invalidating feelings, interrupting one another, using aggressive language, stonewalling** (refusing to communicate due to feeling overwhelmed), **a lack of empathy and defensiveness**.

Poor communication can then lead to resentment, anxiety, depression, heightened stress, low self-esteem, and even **relationship breakdown**.

Ensuring both partners feel heard is key to enhancing communication skills. Let's figure out how to break down these barriers with some helpful tips and make good communication your relationship superpower.

Practice active listening

Give your full attention to one another when you're talking by removing all distractions (such as your phone), choosing the right timing and a calm setting. Engage with one another by asking questions to show you care, as well as nodding, making eye contact and uncrossing your arms. This shows open and welcoming body language.

Express yourself honestly and calmly

Be honest about how you feel – you are not mind readers nor is it healthy to keep your thoughts and feelings bottled up. Use “I” statements to avoid making accusations; for example, instead of saying: “You never have time for me”, rephrase to: “I feel like we don't spend enough time together and it's important to me that we create meaningful moments”.

Patience is a virtue

Good communicators know that misunderstandings are bound to happen. When they do, don't jump to conclusions or get defensive. Take a step back (and some deep breaths) and try to understand your partner's point of view. Empathy goes a long way!

Apologise and forgive (it's good for you!)

Just as there are no mind readers, there hasn't been born a person who doesn't make mistakes. So, apologise when you have a nagging feeling that you're wrong, and practice forgiveness. Use mistakes to improve the relationship and yourselves.



Stay curious and positive!

Ask open-ended questions to deepen your understanding about your emotions and thoughts, such as: “Are there any activities or hobbies you'd like us to try together?”. Use the same positivity when you encounter a relationship hurdle, by focusing on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems.

Set and learn from boundaries

Define your personal limits in a relationship such as those related to giving each other space, and respect them. If they are crossed, reflect on the experience and try to find common ground with your partner.

As you work on your communication skills, keep in mind that every obstacle is an opportunity to learn and grow. If you're curious about some concrete ways you can overcome communication obstacles, I have an infographic for you here. Now, work on these skills together to lay the groundwork for a stronger relationship!



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