



### **Good Communication: The Key to Healthy Relationships**

Good communication is the cornerstone of every healthy relationship. Without effective communication, healthy relationships are difficult to establish and maintain. Yet people often overlook the importance of good communication skills.

There are several things individuals can do to engage in good communication skills. First, one can be an active listener while partaking in conversations. In order to demonstrate active listening skills, good communicators occasionally nod their head while someone is speaking, maintain adequate eye contact, and lean forward slightly when in conversation. Summarizing the key points of an understood message after someone has spoken is also an important part of active listening. This can usually be initiated by saying, "If I understood you correctly, you are saying..." It is also essential to relay the message that you understand what a speaker is feeling. This can typically be accomplished by stating, "It sounds like you are feeling (state feeling), because..."

Another helpful communication tip that can improve communication in any relationship, whether it be with a family, friend, or co-worker, is the use of "I" messages. "I" messages are helpful in minimizing conflict as they prevent people from feeling attacked or becoming defensive. When addressing a concern with someone, rather than saying, "You shouldn't do..." it is much more effective to use an "I" message and say, "I feel (state feeling) when you (state action) because I..."

Keep in mind, although communication is something most people engage in on a daily basis, not everyone communicates effectively. Practicing good communication skills, such as active listening and "I" messages, can enhance one's communication and ultimately lead to healthier relationships.

If you would like more support on improving your communication skills, Palm Beach County Youth Services Department offers free therapy and parent education services to all residents of Palm Beach County with youth between the ages of 0-22. Services are offered in-person and via telehealth. Visit our website at [www.pbcgov.com/youthservices/EducationCenter](http://www.pbcgov.com/youthservices/EducationCenter) for additional information. To contact the Education & Training Center to schedule an appointment, please call 561-233-4460.

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