

Plan To Improve How You Communicate With a Family Member

1. Identify one person in your natural or chosen family with whom you want to improve your relationship. Take a moment, and in a few words, describe the kind of relationship you WANT with this person.
2. How do you WANT to communicate with this person that differs from the way you usually do?
3. Think of something specific that you want to communicate to this person. What do you want to say or ask?
4. What do you want to gain from communicating with this person? For example, is there something that you want to change, to happen, or to know?
5. Check any of these potential obstacles that might apply to your situation:
 - Person has poor listening skills.
 - Person easily gets distracted.
 - Person often overacts and gets angry.
 - Person gets defensive or avoidant.
 - Person can be insensitive and critical.
 - Person is not communicative.
 - Person is challenging to talk with.
 - Person can be manipulative and controlling.
 - Others_____
 - You may want to avoid the person or subject.
 - You may become critical.
 - You may lack energy to deal with this person.
 - You have difficulty staying focused.
 - You may find the person intimidating.
 - You tend to get angry with this person.
 - You may get defensive.
 - Others_____
 - Others_____
6. When you feel defensive, how are you likely to respond? "*I may...*"
 - Avoid, withdraw, or isolate.
 - Deny, minimize, or distort reality.
 - Rationalize, intellectualize.
 - Act out, undo, or overdo.
 - Displace my feelings.
 - Block out or repress my feelings.
 - Become passive-aggressive.
 - Project my feelings onto others.
 - Become sarcastic.
 - Become critical and negative.
 - Comfort myself with food or alcohol.
 - Others_____

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7. What do you want to do **instead** of getting defensive if the person is insensitive to your feelings, limits, or needs?

- Express my feelings to the person.
- Plan & practice how to express myself.
- Learn how to be more assertive.
- Channel my feelings privately.
- Seek ideas for future situations.
- Other _____

8. Plan to communicate to increase your chances of gaining the results you want:

- a. What do you want to say?
- b. How do you want to express yourself?
- c. When and where will you communicate?
- d. Whose support do you need and want?

9. Which approaches do you want to use to improve how you communicate with this person?

"I will..."

- Use "I" statements.
- Communicate honestly and directly.
- Select a good time and place to talk.
- Express concern for the person.
- Show interest by asking questions.

- Thank the person; show gratitude.
- Keep private matters confidential.
- Ask for feedback.
- Make eye contact when talking.
- Negotiate responsibilities.
- Listen attentively.
- Keep an open mind and heart.
- Respond directly to questions.
- Share my thoughts and feelings.
- Express my needs directly.
- Say when I am offended and the reasons.
- Stay calm during disagreements.
- Stop interrupting the person.
- Stay focused on the subject.
- Share how polio has affected my life.
- Describe my limits and needs.
- Become aware of when I react intensely.
- Seek to understand what causes the person to react intensely.
- Respond calmly to accusations.
- Respond to "Challenging Personalities:"
 - Set positive goals.
 - Be specific, clear, and brief.
 - Focus on facts and behaviors.
 - Use positive words.
 - Ask for feedback on agreements.
 - Emphasize your limits.