



Communication Tips

Active Listening:

- **Distancing Phrase** – Starting out with a phrase such as “It sounds like ...” or “I think I’m hearing you say...” lets the speaker know that you are working to understand what they are saying.
- **Affirm and Reflect** – Utilize empathy to acknowledge the emotions and intensity of the speaker. Summarize the key points and details that you heard them share.
- **Check-In** – Ensure that your reflection has accurately captured what the person was trying to convey. Use phrases like “Is that right?” or “Is there anything I missed?”
- **Open Ended Questions** – In order to dig deeper, ask open-ended questions about the issues and interests shared by the other person. Open-ended questions are questions that cannot be answered in one word. This calls upon the speaker to reflect on their own views, and helps the listener to better understand the perspective of the speaker

Example: Your roommate approaches you and begins shouting about how they have had to wash the dishes every night for the last week and take out the trash because it was spilling out of the can.

You could respond with...

“It sounds like you are feeling overwhelmed and disrespected and that fairness in how we share the responsibility of keeping the apartment clean is important to you. Did I get that right?”

And then follow up with...

“What would fairness look like in this situation?”

I-Statements:

- **Feelings** – Articulate the emotions tied to a specific context. This helps the listener to recognize the impact that a situation is having on you.
Ex: I feel disrespected...
- **Topics** – Describe the context that triggers those emotions. In doing so you can apply specificity to the situation instead of speaking in broad generalities.
Ex: when I am not included in family decisions...
- **Values** – Provide the “why” that links those emotions to that specific context. Without the “why”, a listener may view the situation through the lens of their own values and thus misunderstand the impact. This also provides an opportunity to propose an action you would like to see instead.
Ex: because I value having a say in issues that affect me. In the future, it would mean a lot if we could discuss family matters together.

Additional Examples:

I feel frustrated when the apartment is a mess because I value living in a clean space. Can we come up with a schedule for cleaning?

I start to feel defensive when people are shouting because it reminds me of heated arguments from my past. I want to have this conversation with you so can I ask that we speak to one another in a more even tone?

I get angry when someone interrupts me because it often takes a while before I feel confident enough to share my opinion. I want to hear what you have to say and I appreciate being given the space to finish what I am saying.