

DON'T SPEAK TO ME THAT WAY

Effective and compassionate communication

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Ever heard the saying “Sticks and stones will break my bones but words can never hurt me”? This old phrase needs to be put to bed, because the opposite is true. As humans beings, we want to engage in meaningful conversations while expressing our feelings. If this is done through destructive language, it can be hurtful to one’s self-worth and confidence, even though it may not leave visible marks. Since judgemental words can also damage relationships, we need to be careful how we communicate with our partners. Communicating more compassionately is a winning strategy to get our point across to others.

When we communicate, try and keep the following things in mind:

- Use “I” statements instead of “You”
- Demonstrate compassion for your partner
- Actively listen before speaking
- Speak as you would like to be spoken to

For example, if your partner

begins yelling at you due to an unfortunate incident, you could say: “Shut up. You’re always yelling at me for no reason. You’re terrible!” Or you can use more positive wording such as: “It’s not okay to speak to me like that. It’s hurtful and meaningless.”

This response will not only calm your partner but trigger a more understanding reply. You’re speaking your feelings without driving your partner to a “fight or flight” response. Positive and effective communication means expressing feelings and thoughts without triggering a defensive back-and-forth. It’s important to accept responsibility for our feelings and express them clearly without blaming or shaming. When we speak compassionately, we can still communicate our most difficult thoughts while acting in a caring and loving manner and expressing any discontent.

Let’s review several elements that affect our communication styles:

ANGER We all suffer from anger from time to time. It’s a powerful emotion. When our anger is not under control, however, it can produce arguments, altercations, physical abuse, and assault. On the

other hand, when anger is well-managed, it’s useful and motivates us to make positive changes.

VERBAL/EMOTIONAL/PHYSICAL ABUSE Oftentimes, partners in close relationships experience some form of abuse, either emotional, verbal, and/or physical. Such abuse causes us to “shut-down” and isolate ourselves. There is no real communication.

ARROGANCE Arrogant people hardly ever admit to their mistakes, and try to deflect attention to other people and/or other factors. Maintain an open mind and be willing to admit your mishaps. Learn to say “thank you” and appreciate the contributions of others.

DISHONESTY Honest communication is not only a crucial skill to learn, but mandatory to a healthy relationship. When you feel angry, annoyed, irritated, or disappointed, express your true feelings clearly and calmly.

POSSESSIVENESS Possessiveness can be overwhelming and create disunity among loved ones. Maintaining a healthy relationship requires both parties

to sustain their personal interests and unique characteristics while still compromising for the sake of your partner’s needs. Remember, healthy relationships require partners to give and take, with each individual having the freedom to be his/herself while sharing their lives together.

LACK OF EMPATHY With empathy, we show sensitivity towards others’ feelings. When we demonstrate true understanding, our empathy assists us in communicating with our children, colleagues, friends, and partners.

We can significantly improve our relationships when we communicate with compassion. Positive communication is contagious and brings out the best in us all. When we communicate positively, others are more likely to listen to us and our conversations are more meaningful. ❖