

# How Can I Communicate Better

Part of being in a healthy relationship is having good communication. Use the guidelines below to open up the channels of communication between you and your partner. If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful using these tips. You know your relationship best. If any of these tips would put you in danger, don't try them.

For healthier communication, try to:

- **Find the Right Time.** If something is bothering you and you would like to have a serious conversation about it, make sure you pick the right time to talk. Don't interrupt your partner when they're watching a sports game, TV show, about to go to sleep or stressed about an upcoming test. Tell your partner you would like to talk later and find a time when you're in the same room and not doing anything important. Don't start serious conversations in public places unless you don't feel safe.
- **Talk Face to Face.** Avoid talking about serious matters or issues in writing. Text messages, letters and emails can be misinterpreted. Talk in person so there aren't any unnecessary miscommunications.
- **Do Not Attack.** Even when we mean well, we can sometimes come across as harsh because of our word choice. Using "you" can sound like you're attacking, which will make your partner defensive and less receptive to your message. Instead, try using "I" or "we." For example, say "I feel like we haven't been as close lately" instead of "You have been distant with me."
- **Be Honest.** Agree to be honest. Sometimes the truth hurts, but it's the key to a healthy relationship. Admit that you aren't always perfect and apologize when you make a mistake instead of making excuses. You will feel better and it will help strengthen your relationship.
- **Check Your Body Language.** Make eye contact when speaking. Sit up and face your partner. Let your partner know you're listening. Show them you really care. Don't take a phone call, text or play a video game when you're talking. Listen and respond.
- **Use the 48 Hour Rule.** If your partner does something that makes you angry, you need to tell them about it. But you don't have to do so right away. If you're still hurt 48 hours later, say something. If not, consider forgetting about it. But remember your partner can't read your mind. If you don't speak up when you're upset, there is no way for them to apologize or change. Once you do mention your hurt feelings and your partner sincerely apologizes, let it go. Don't bring up past issues if they're not relevant.

## How to Communicate if You Are Angry

- **Stop.** If you get really angry about something, stop, take a step back and breathe. Give yourself time to calm down by watching TV, talking to a friend, playing a video game, taking a walk, listening to some music or whatever helps you relax. Taking a break can keep the situation from getting worse.
- **Think.** After you're no longer upset, think about the situation and why you got so angry. Was it how your partner spoke or something they did? Figure out the real problem then think about how to explain your feelings.
- **Talk.** Finally, talk to your partner and when you do, follow the tips above.
- **Listen.** After you tell your partner how you feel, remember to stop talking and listen to what they have to say. You both deserve the opportunity to express how you feel in a safe and healthy environment.

Communicating isn't always easy. At first, some of these tips may feel unnatural or awkward, but they will help you communicate better and build a healthy relationship.

