



COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS



We use communication skills in everyday situations and in a variety of circumstances. It is important to consider the way we communicate as it can impact on how others receive it or how we come across. It is a skill that isn't easy for everyone or can be more difficult in certain situations. We communicate with both close friends and family and with strangers or colleagues. This can be through either face to face, on the telephone or on the internet or social media.

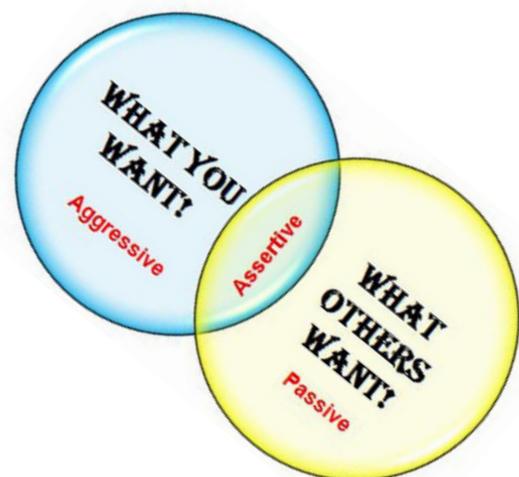
Anxiety or low mood can get in the way of communication due to not socialising as often or avoiding social situations. Therefore, you can lose **confidence** due to avoiding these situations and not using communication skills.

Our values and **beliefs** about ourselves, others or the world can also impact on our style of communication. **Good communication skills** can help show others you respect them but also help you to clearly put across your own needs and it can also benefit the quality of relationships. It can also increase the chances of what you want to get out of a situation and prevent resentment building up. It can **increase self-esteem** and help you hear and understand others more clearly.

Difficulties can arise in communication when people **do not listen to each other** and therefore **don't understand each other**. Therefore, it is important for us all to consider how we communicate and whether this could be improved upon.

You may have heard of **different types of communication** such as **passive or aggressive**. If you are aware of **your own style** it can be helpful in thinking about how you want to be. An assertive communication style is preferable when used in a **respectful way**. Your **upbringing** or **experiences** or **emotions** can all **contribute** to what **communication style** you have. It can be helpful to **reflect and consider** your own style but try to **develop an assertive communication style**.

- **Assertive** – expressing your view or opinion in a respectful way.
- **Passive** – when you do things you think others will approve of or agree with others views and not give your own opinions.
- **Aggressive** – trying to control or dominate others.
- **Passive-aggressive** – indirect aggressive behaviour such as sulking or being sarcastic



ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

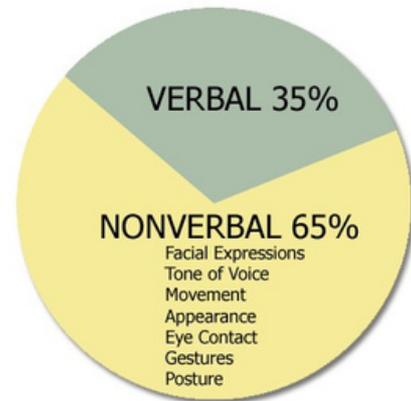
An assertiveness communication style is the ability to be able to express thoughts, emotions, beliefs and needs both clearly and honestly whilst respecting both yourself and the rights of others.

Expressive skills – when you identify your own thoughts feelings or wishes and express them in the first person to another person in a clear and specific manner.

Receptive skills – the person listening uses non-verbal listening skills and eye contact, head nodding, empathising, or paraphrasing back.

Techniques

- **Paraphrasing or reflections**
- **Non-verbal and verbal communication**
- **Conversational skills**
- **Assertiveness techniques**



Paraphrasing or Reflections

This is a way of showing you are listening and checking that you are understanding the other person correctly. Listen to what the other person is saying and rephrase in a tentative and questioning way e.g. 'I think you're saying that...' or checking if that was what they had meant. It is important to respect yourself and express both your thoughts and feelings. Also being prepared for what you want to say can be helpful.

Non-verbal Characteristics



- Receptive listening
- Good eye contact without staring
- Open body stance
- Open hand movements
- Smile when appropriate
- Facial expression respond or match appropriately to what you are hearing
- Relaxed face and jaw

Verbal Characteristics



- Firm relaxed voice
- Steady and even pace
- Warm middle range tone
- Sincere and clear
- Seek opinions of others
- Open to other solutions
- 'I' statements **"I feel ... when you...."**

CONVERSATION SKILLS

Many people don't feel confident making conversation, especially with people that aren't familiar. 'Small talk' can involve commenting on the weather or the news or complimenting the other person and may feel strange at first if you are not used to this, but it can help initiate and lead to further conversation. As with other things it takes practice. It is also important to remember that conversation is two way and involves both listening and taking your turn to speak.

Assertive Communication

- o Clearly state what your need or want is
- o Use eye contact (not staring but using frequent eye contact)
- o Actively listen to others without interrupting
- o Be aware of your volume
- o Use a steady calm tone of voice
- o Use confident but not intimidating body language
- o Use **GIVE** skill (detailed on next page)
- o Use **"I" statements** (detailed on next page)
- o Use **DEAR MAN** (detailed on next page)



IT LOOKS LIKE

- Lack of eye contact
- Looking down
- Not expressing your feelings or needs
- Avoiding problems

IT SOUNDS LIKE

- "I'm okay with whatever you want."
- "People don't think about my feelings."
- "It's fine. I don't want to get anyone in trouble."

- Eye rolling
- Finger pointing
- Angry or forceful words
- Focused on your needs
- Rude or bossy

- "This is what we're doing."
- "You can't play with me if you don't play this game."
- Statements that begin with "You"

- Making eye contact
- Calm but firm voice
- Respecting your rights and the rights of others

- "I don't want to play soccer. Do you want to play football instead?"
- "I feel sad when you say I can't play." Statements that begin with "I"

GIVE SKILL

This is a skill that can be used in a variety of situations and help maintain healthy relationships, such as needing to stand up for yourself.

Be Gentle – avoid making threats or attacks and try to be gentle in your approach which people respond better to and accept when people say no to requests.

Act Interested in the other person as others feel better when you are interested in them and try not to interrupt or talk over them.

Validate – acknowledge the other person’s feelings and what they say e.g. ‘I can see this is very difficult for you’.

Use an Easy manner – use humour if appropriate and try to be light-hearted and smile.

Consider ‘I’ Statements

This is a helpful way of speaking to prevent other people feeling like you are blaming them for something. For example, if commenting about something by saying ‘I feel...when you are late to meet me’ rather than ‘you make me cross when you are late’.

Using “I” statements can also help you to take responsibility for your own feelings. It also comes across as less argumentative and the other person is more likely to understand your perspective and respond in a helpful way.

Assertive Communication Formula

When you _____,
Pinpoint the specific action that prompted your response. Just the facts.

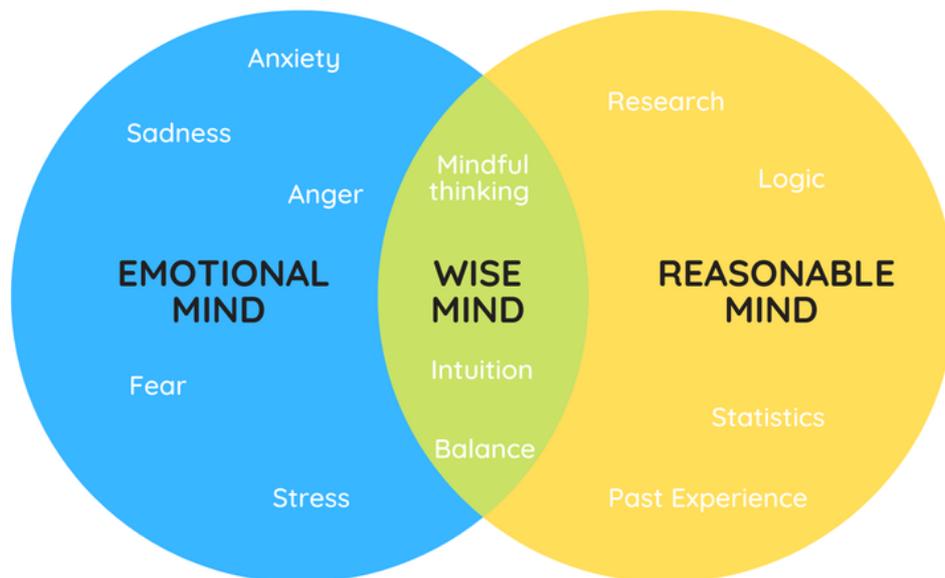
I feel/felt _____,

because _____,
Optional for the conversation, but helps define the true source of your feeling.

What I want/need from you is _____.
Ask for what you need, and let go of the outcome.

WISE MIND

This diagram can be a helpful way of thinking about how you perceive or understand other people. An **emotional mind** is when you think what someone says reflects onto you and how you are feeling and can result in becoming overwhelmed and confused. A **reasonable mind** is when you consider the facts and approach situations intellectually but don't pay attention to emotions. Finally, a **wise mind** is a balance between the two and focuses on getting things done, able to acknowledge feelings but also with a rational mind.



Step One: Remind yourself that you are on the path of learning a skill that has the potential to really help you with your emotional decision making or too factual decision making.

Two: Thinking About a Problem in Your Life

Before we can proceed with asking our wise mind for help, first we need to settle into our breathing. Put your arm on your belly, and let's do a little abdominal breathing (covered in our previous exercise Mindful breathing). As you breathe become aware of how your belly goes up and down as you inhale and exhale air. Breathe several times, and relax your body.

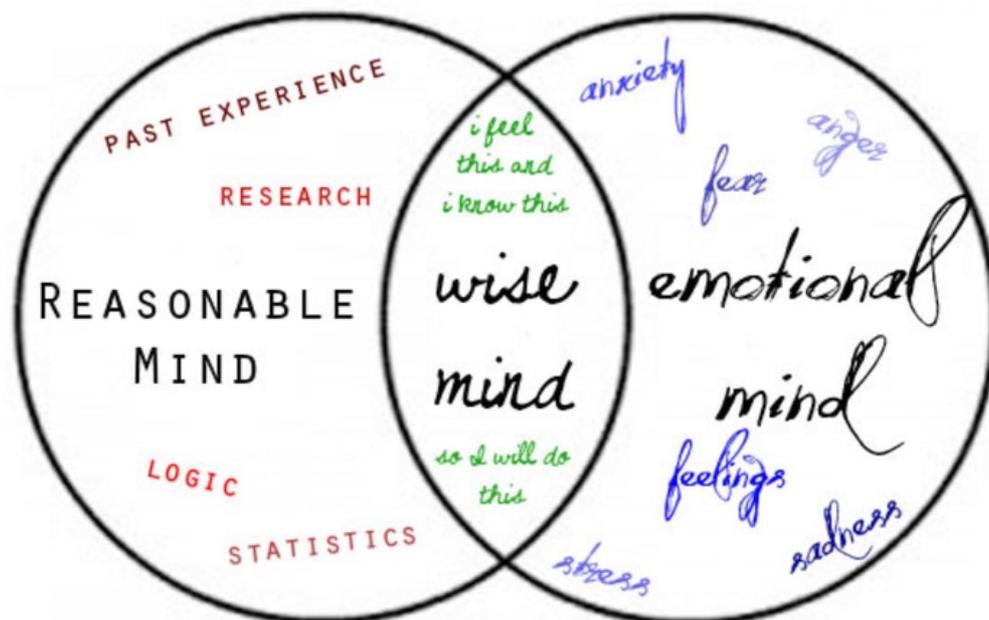
Now, try to think about a problem in your life that has been bothering you lately. Give yourself a couple of minutes and think about that. What do you feel has been an issue for you lately? Maybe you feel like you are not happy with your job and don't know what career path you really want to take, and that has been making you feel uneasy. Perhaps you started thinking about how bored you feel in your free time and how monotonous your past several months have been. Tune in and gently observe what the main thing or issue that you started thinking about is.

Step Three: Using Your Wise Mind

After you have observed the problem that your mind started thinking about, now ask your wise mind for guidance. Pick one of the two methods. Set your timer for 5 minutes.

Method 1: Ask your wise mind a question about how to solve or approach your problem. Listen for the answer. Don't try to answer it yourself as you usually do. Instead try to tap into your intuition and look for your gut-feeling. Listen for the answer. If an answer came to you then just notice it and try not to perceive it in a judgmental way. Just be aware of the answer that your wise mind provided you. If no answer occurred to you, that's okay. When you do the exercise next time, you will be more familiar with it and maybe you will get an answer then.

Method 2: Listen to your wise mind. Sometimes we don't need to ask an explicit question about the problem that we have. Maybe we don't exactly know what to ask, or we are too aware of the issues that we don't need the question. In this case, just think about the problem and tune in with your intuition. Listen to your wise mind. Did any answer or solution in any form come to you? Keep doing this until the time runs out. Whatever thought, solution or answer you receive, just accept it non-judgmentally, and observe what it is.



DEAR MAN?

This can be a helpful technique in communicating with others and maintaining healthy respectful relationships.

Describe the current situation and stick to the facts.

Describe

Express your feeling such as 'I feel... when I'm left waiting' using "I" statements,

Express

Ask clearly what you want and need.

Assert

Reinforce or reward people, for example saying thank you or give a suggestion of something positive that might happen if suggesting something.

Reinforce

Mindful – keep your focus on what you want and avoid distractions or repeating yourself or getting to an argument.

Mindful

Appear confident and use good eye contact (practice with someone close to you) and speak loudly, clearly, and confidently.

Assertive

Negotiate and ask for the other person's input or solutions and come to a compromise,

Negotiate



Thinking Styles

It is also important to be mindful of your thinking styles due to the impact of your thoughts on your behaviour as well as your emotions on your behaviour. For example thinking 'if someone says no to me it's because they don't like me' or 'I will upset or burden other people with my problems' will impact on your behaviour in social interactions and relationships. Check our information on unhelpful thoughts if you wish to read more about this. It may help you to be more assertive and seek help or act more helpfully in your communication.

If you are aware of these types of thoughts affecting your communication, you could try challenging them or setting up a behavioural experiment:

- Identify unhelpful behaviour
- Identify more realistic prediction
- Set up an experiment of what you are going to do
- Carry it out
- Evaluate

Example

Sally's friend is often late or does not turn up when they have made plans to meet up. She could plan to ask her friend, 'Can you let me know if you're unable to make it as I plan my day around us meeting up'. She could also use mindfulness to help her to stay calm whilst talking to her friend about the situation.

Mindfulness

See our information sheet on mindfulness and apps you can use – this can help you to stay calm and avoid getting into conflict in your communication with others, by paying attention to what you've got going on inside of you as well as what's outside of you, in a non-judgemental way.

If your self-esteem, anxiety, mood, or temper is getting in the way of good communication please check our other resources and online video courses on these subjects.

