

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.

Communication Styles and Skills

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



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*

4 effective communication techniques

Paraphrasing or Reflections

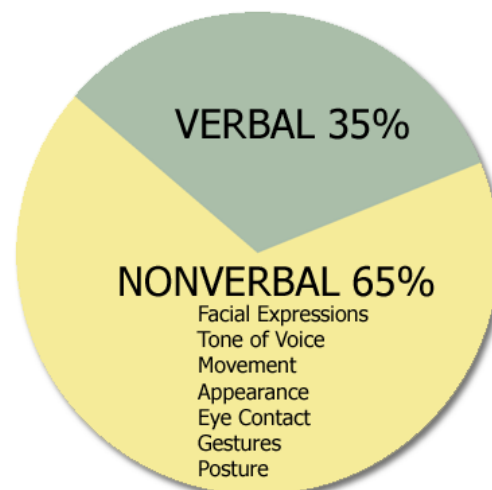


This is a way of showing you are listening and checking that you are understanding the other person correctly. Listen to what the other person is saying and rephrase in a tentative and questioning way e.g. 'I think you're saying that...' or checking if that was what they had meant.

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

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

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



IT LOOKS LIKE	IT SOUNDS LIKE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of eye contact • Looking down • Not expressing your feelings or needs • Avoiding problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "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."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye rolling • Finger pointing • Angry or forceful words • Focused on your needs • Rude or bossy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "This is what we're doing." • "You can't play with me if you don't play this game." • Statements that begin with "You"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making eye contact • Calm but firm voice • Respecting your rights and the rights of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "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.



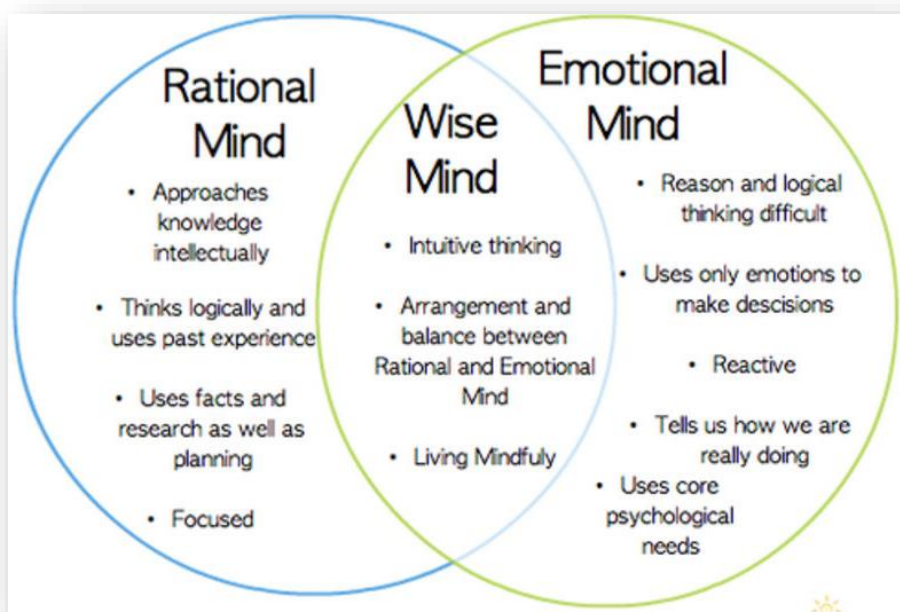
Consider ‘Wise Mind’

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.



Consider 'DEAR MAN' (acronym)

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

- Describe the current situation and stick to the facts
- Express your feeling such as 'I feel... when I'm left waiting' using "I" statements
- Reinforce or reward people, for example saying thank you or give a suggestion of something positive that might happen if suggesting something
- Mindful – keep your focus on what you want and avoid distractions or repeating yourself or getting to an argument
- Appear confident and use good eye contact (practice with someone close to you) and speak loudly, clearly, and confidently
- Negotiate and ask for the other person's input or solutions and come to a compromise

DEARMAN

What does DEARMAN (or DEAR MAN) stand for?

Describe
Express
Assert
Reinforce

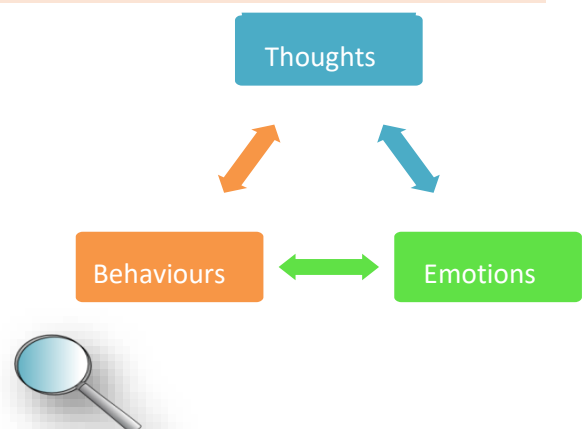
Mindful
Assertive
Negotiate

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.

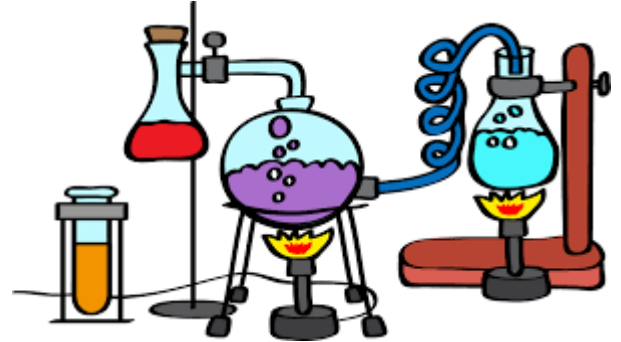
Check our information on unhelpful thoughts if you wish to read more about this. It may help you to be more assertive and seek help or act more helpfully in your communication.



Behaviour Experiment

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

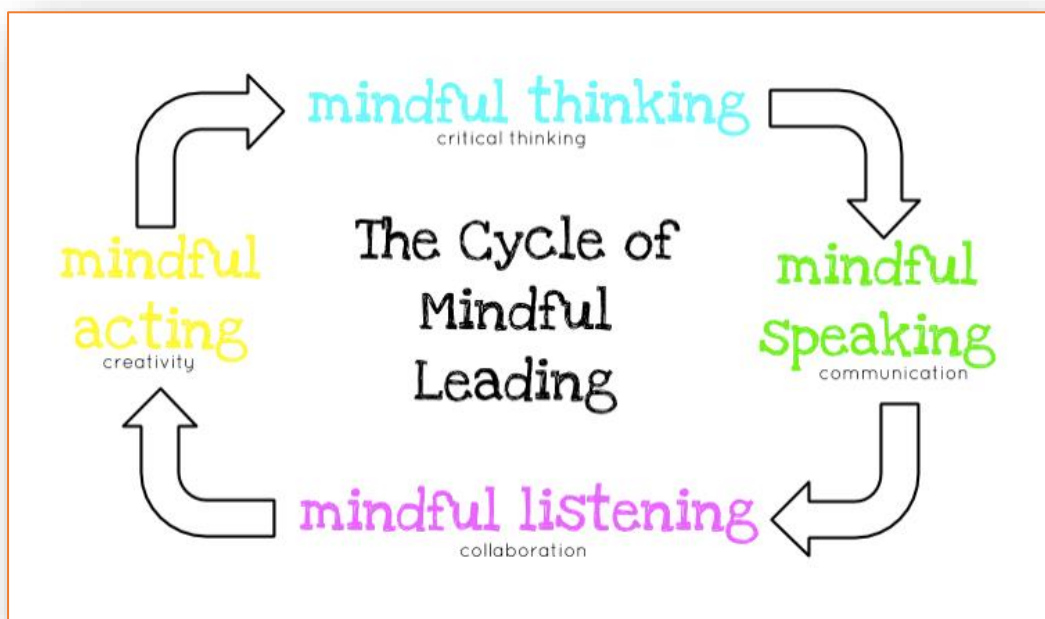
Sally's friend is often late or does not turn up when they have made plans to meet up. She could plan to ask her friend, 'Can you let me know if you're unable to make it as I plan my day around us meeting up'.

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.






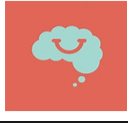
If your self-esteem, anxiety, mood, or temper is getting in the way of good communication please check our other resources and online video courses on these subjects.



Our recommended resources (click for direct access):

NHS Inform	Offers the most up-to-date advice on dealing varying mental health difficulties, including the 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing. Please visit: NHS Inform
Wellbeing	Our website offers a variety of self-help materials, groups, and courses for all sorts of problems that you may be facing. Anyone can download the self- help materials. Please visit: Wellbeing Website Glasgow
Mental Health Foundation	A range of content designed to give you more information about mental health and to help you to look after your mental health. Please visit: Your Mental Health - Mental Health Foundation
NHS Every Mind Matters	Interactive website providing you the opportunity to complete a short quiz which creates a Mind Plan of what you can do to improve your mental health. Please visit: Every Mind Matters
Psych Central	Run by mental health professionals offering reliable, trusted information to individuals struggling with a mental health. There is also an excellent quiz section. Please visit: PsychCentral for Mental Health
MIND	Information hub provides advice on how to support your mental wellbeing. Please visit: MIND Information Hub
SAMH	Hub of information and guidance about looking after mental health. Please visit: SAMH Guidance for Mental Health

Useful Apps:

	Mind Shift	Rather than trying to avoid anxious feelings, Mind Shift stresses the importance of changing how you think about anxiety. It can encourage you to take charge of your life, ride out intense emotions, and face challenging situations
	SAM	SAM might be perfect for you if you're interested in self-help, but meditation isn't your thing. Users are prompted to build their own 24-hour anxiety toolkit that allows you to track anxious thoughts and behaviour over time and learn 25 different self-help techniques.
	Happify	Need a happy fix? With its psychologist-approved mood-training program, the Happify app is your fast-track to a good mood. Try various engaging games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to overcome negative thoughts.
	Headspace	The Headspace app makes meditation simple. Learn the skills of mindfulness and meditation by using this app for just a few minutes per day. You gain access to hundreds of meditations on everything from stress and anxiety to sleep and focus.
	Calm	Calm provides people experiencing stress and anxiety with guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing programs, and relaxing music.
	Smiling Mind	Smiling mind is a way to practice daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. This is helpful during times of stress and is a fun and unique way to help you put a smile on your mind.