

Creating Effective Conversations

In business and in interpersonal relationships, effective communication is fundamental to getting positive results. Ensuring you are understood – and that you really hear and understand what is being said to you can shape an effective relationship. The following tips will guide you towards being an effective communicator.



HELPFUL TIPS:

- ▶ **Be an active listener:** simple as it sounds – really listening and hearing what is being said. We often go into a conversation thinking we know the answer. Approaching conversations with an open mind and curiosity sets the scene for a far more effective conversation. Make a time that suits both parties for conversations. Don't assume someone is ready to talk about an issue simply because you are. Invite them, find a private place conducive to having the discussion at a time that works best for both of you.
- ▶ **Prepare emotionally for the conversation,** 'check yourself in' to being receptive. Observe your body. If you feel tension, focusing on slow, deep breathing before and during to remain calm as you can think and respond best when you are calm.
- ▶ **Show you are listening with body language** – face the person, lean in slightly, make eye contact, smile. Keep it authentic. Observe their body language as you can read their engagement through posture, tone or vocal pitch. Words convey some of the message; non-verbals convey the remainder of the message.
- ▶ **Check understanding** by using clarifying questions through the conversation ("Am I correct in thinking your position is...") this also indicates that you are engaged and are interested in exploring what they have to say.
- ▶ **Avoid responding with 'but'.** If you answer someone with "Great point! But my understanding is..." you agree, then immediately backpedal. Restated as "That's a good point. My understanding is..." shows that you value both positions.
- ▶ **Allow the person to speak without talking over them** or interrupting them. Let them finish each point before stating your view or asking further questions.
- ▶ **Utilising Silence:** Silence can feel uncomfortable but respecting those natural pauses (without feeling the need to jump in and talk) allows the other person to gather their thoughts before they proceed. Respecting quiet moments is a powerful tool for meaningful conversations.
- ▶ **Summarise.** At the end of the conversation, state what your understanding of the main points have been, and invite the other person to agree or offer clarification. This helps solidify your grasp of the other person's perspective and assures them that they have been listened to and understood.

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