Healthy Communication Habits

Below are some healthy communication habits to cultivate that will help you when you are feeling emotional about a situation that needs to be discussed. These will require ongoing **practice**, so be patient with yourself.

* **Check in with your heart** – Get to the root of what you are feeling. If you feel angry, see if you can identify the emotion that is underneath the anger. When you engage in a discussion with the person who hurt you, be sure to come from a place of love in your heart, not a place of contempt. What is in your heart will be reflected in your tone of voice. Practice speaking your truth in love.
* **Ground your emotions** – Don’t engage in a discussion when you are emotional. Take the time you need, maybe sleep it off, and engage in a conversation when you are less emotionally charged.
* **Be intentional** – Stop the habit of “reacting” when you are hurt. Practice becoming more intentional about what you say and how you “respond”. Your words have the power to speak life and death, so be mindful of what comes out of your mouth.
* **Don’t bring up of the past** – Once a situation from the past has been discussed and resolved, do not bring it up again unless you need more clarification or closure about it. Bringing up the past is usually used to shame the other person, and it’s a dysfunctional communication habit. Stay engaged in what is happening in the moment without bringing up the past.
* **Let go of the need to be right** – This will take humility. Allow yourself to own your part of what happened. Remember, sometimes being at peace is much better than being right. Do you want peace or do you want to be right?
* **Use “I STATEMENTS”** – It’s important to own your thoughts and feelings and not blame others for how you think or feel. The best way to do this is to avoid using “YOU STATEMENTS” and replace these with “I STATEMENTS”.
* **Stop black-and-white/all-or-nothing thinking** – This is a disordered thinking pattern that is rooted in perfectionism. It distorts how you process what is right and wrong. This way of thinking will leave you (and others) feeling like a failure. If you have a tendency to think in “absolutes” and draw negative conclusions, work on bringing more balance to your thinking and perspective. Practice finding win/win solutions to issues that are being discussed without letting your mind jump to negative conclusions.
* **Practice reflection** – Reflection is a term that means repeating back what you heard the other person say. Repeating back what was said to you is a good way to ensure you heard what was said correctly and makes the other person feel heard.
* **Be assertive (stop the “attack and defend” pattern)** – If you tend to be either too passive or too aggressive, practice more assertive communication. Most people speak in a pattern of “attack and defend”. Practicing the 4 steps for assertive communication will help you break the “attack and defend” communication pattern.
* **Pick the right time** – Timing is important. Sometimes you will want to address a situation in the moment, and other times you may need to wait to resolve a conflict. Use wisdom to identify the appropriate time to address a conflict. You may need time to ground your emotions or time to think through what you want to say so you can be intentional about your response.
* **Humor and playfulness can help** – Don’t forget to lighten the mood. Communicating how you feel and what you need from others doesn’t need to be so heavy all the time. See how you can be more playful and bring some humor into a situation.