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**Tips for Effective Communication**

**General Tips**

* Set aside a calm time to talk; keep the time free from interruptions
* Stay relaxed and seated; breathe
* Keep an open, relaxed body posture and consistent eye contact; no finger-pointing or pacing
* Stay focused on one issue at a time. It’s not helpful to store up resentments and dump them all at once; plan an additional time to talk about other issues if necessary
* Don’t walk away or leave the house while you are arguing, unless you have the other person’s agreement.
* If a “cool down” break is needed, agree to take a timeout and set a mutually agreeable time to come back to the conversation.
* Remember that your story about the way it is might not actually be the way it is. Try to understand the other person’s perspective and be open to change and compromise.
* Change your part of any pattern you notice isn’t working; feelings, thoughts and stories don’t control your actions – you do!
* Don’t’ assume the other person won’t change; be patient and give them a chance to show you they can.
* The goal is not to win, but to solve the problem so you both get what you need.

**Listening Tips**

* Look at the other person and give them your full attention.
* Don’t interrupt.
* Don’t rebut, dismiss or minimize. Just listen.
* Don’t criticize the other person’s feelings/opinions. You don’t have to agree with them, but don’t make them feel crazy or wrong for feeling the way they do.
* Actively listen – let the other person know you’ve heard them by acknowledging their experiences; see if you can really understand what they’re trying to say
* If you’re confused about what the other person is saying, paraphrase back what you think you heard and check it out with them.

**Speaking Tips**

* Be respectful – use “please” and “thank-you.”
* Rephrase a complaint into a request.
* Focus your request on specific behaviors, not the person as a whole.
* Use the “sandwich” technique – praise, request, praise.
* Use I messages (I feel, I think, I would like . . .) instead of blaming (You are, You make me . . .).
* Don’t use “never” or “always.”
* Don’t offer the person your theory/explanation/diagnosis (why they did what they did) along with your request.
* Tell the person what they did or didn’t do that didn’t work for you, and ask them to do something different in the future. Be specific (what, when, how often . . .).
* Don’t expect the other person to mind-read. Ask for what you want.