

Communication Skills

- **Active Listening** – Active listening involves taking an active effort to focus on paying attention to what someone is saying and being alert. It's important to listen completely to what someone else is saying before thinking about how you're going to respond or starting to talk. This helps the person talking feel like you're paying attention and to make sure you don't miss any important points. Using nonverbal communication can help keep you engaged and show the speaker that you're listening. Be sure to wait for the speaker to finish what they're saying before you start to talk and avoid interrupting.
- **Nonverbal communication** – Using nonverbal communication is an integral part of active listening. Nodding and using hand gestures are a physical way for you to stay engaged and to show the speaker that you are actively listening to what they are saying. Using eye contact to show that you're engaged and facial expressions as reactions are also important elements of nonverbal communication.
- **Ask clarifying questions**- If you're feeling confused or not sure you understood something correctly, it's very important to ask questions to clarify what someone was trying to communicate. Misinterpretation is one of the biggest challenges in communication holes.
- **Summarizing and Clarifying** – Clarifying and summarizing is the process of repeating back what you are hearing or what you understood to make sure you are interpreting what the speaker is trying to communicate and to help yourself remember what you've just heard. This also shows the speaker that you were listening to what they were saying.
- **Preparation** – Preparing important points for difficult conversations can help you make sure you address the things you want to communicate. A bulleted list written down or remembered can help you keep track of your communication goals.
- **Friendliness** – Approaching communication with friendliness can make communication more productive. Friendliness through body language, facial expressions and tones are all important ways to communicate clearly and effectively and make the recipient more comfortable.
- **Respect** – Mutual respect is fundamental to effective communication. Respecting that other people have a right to their own opinions and experiences is a helpful perspective to create safety in communication.
- **Open mindedness** – Going into conversations with an open mind and not making assumptions about the people you are communicating with helps you to be more clear and to hear the other person's point of view. Making assumptions of others can lead to defensiveness and getting stuck in conversations.
- **Empathy** – Empathy is understanding other people's experience. Coming from an empathic stance during communication can help promote an open mind and respect for the person you're communicating with.
- **Compromise** – Being willing to compromise can be an important part of communicating during difficult conversations. The people you are communicating with are not always going to come to the same understanding that you are, so being prepared to compromise and to accept that you have different viewpoints can help create respect in communicating.