

Respectful Communication Guidelines



Below are some specific ways to relate to others more respectfully. To embrace these new ways of being with others will make a huge difference to your own sense of self, as well as to how others perceive you.

- **Limiting the amount of space you take** when talking to others.
- **Not interrupting people who are speaking**, and allowing people to finish what they are saying. When people pause, it does not necessarily mean they have finished, but are catching their breath and getting their thoughts together
- **Becoming a good listener.** Active listening — that is staying with what the person is saying — is not a passive activity. It requires being open to hearing what the other person is saying and resisting the urge to censor out what it is you may not like about what they are saying.
- **Getting and giving support.** If we are able to put our own agendas aside and see the overall picture of what is to be achieved, it is possible to work with others as opposed to working against them. The final goals of most people are good relationships with others and the ability to resolve issues of difficulty so that they come out feeling they have been taken seriously.
- **Not rushing to give answers and solutions.** While sharing our ideas, beliefs and possible solutions to a problem is important, the process whereby the problem is resolved is the critical aspect. Each of us needs to be responsible for our part in working together to resolve issues; no one enjoys having solutions forced upon them. A more respectful way to work through issues is for everyone to have their say and to come to a joint agreement.
- **Not speaking on every topic.** It gets very boring having someone being an expert on every topic. It is crucial to have the broadest range of ideas possible. The final decision is much stronger as a result. Perhaps you don't have to have an opinion on everything.
- **No put-downs.** These only make the situation worse and build resentment. Remember to apply the Respect Test as a guide to whether you are doing this or not.
- **Challenging others' oppressive behaviour.** Each of us needs to take responsibility for behaviour that we know is harmful to others. If you see others acting in destructive

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ways, point it out. It is not helpful to collude with disrespectful behaviour. You will be aware of how this has been unhelpful in shaking off the abusive patterns of relating to others in your own life.

Questions to Ponder

- As I become more responsible for how I relate to others in a respectful way, will this increase or decrease their wish to share their good ideas with me? In what ways will I see this happening?
- What will it be like being open to others' important views about how they see certain situations or events? (Some men just don't want to hear ideas that contradict their own.) Will I be open to hearing these ideas or will I try to take back power and control by using tactics that keep me in the driver's seat?



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