

Communication 101: *The Pull and Push of Constructive Communication*

Supportiveness Skills: The “Pull”

I. Paraphrasing: Re-stating in one’s own words what another person has said.

How to paraphrase

- A. Keep the focus on the one you’re paraphrasing. “So you felt....” “You’re saying....” “You believe....”
- B. Re-state in your own words, rather than simply parroting the speaker.
- C. Be brief, much it briefer than the speaker.
- D. Paraphrase *content, feeling, or both*.
- E. Match to some extent the emotional intensity of the speaker in your paraphrase.

Advantages of Paraphrasing

- Shows that you are understanding or at least are trying.
- Helps speaker to clarify thinking.
- Affirms worth of speaker.
- Helps you buy time if not ready to respond.
- Slows down a fast or angry conversation, helping to reduce the intensity of the conflict.

Examples

- “So you were really nervous when....”
- “You felt I was being unfair to you when....”
- “Let me make sure I’m understanding you. You’re saying....“

II. Openness: Communicating openness to hearing the perceptions and needs of others, even if those may be critical or competitive.

Examples

- “Say more about....”
- “Spell that out further.”
- “Tell me what you have in mind.”
- “Give me a specific example.”

III. Agreement Stating: Acknowledging where one agrees with others in the midst of a disagreement.

Examples

- “I agree with you that....”
- “I can see what you’re saying about....”
- “I share your concerns about....”

Assertiveness Skills: The “Push”

I. I-Messages: Confronting by talking about oneself rather than the other person, focusing especially on the impact of the situation on one’s *emotions* or *performance*. “I feel (emotion) when you (problem behavior) because (impact on me).”

Examples

- “I felt angry when you told me to meet you at noon and then you didn’t come or call, because I had changed my plans so we could meet.”
- “It’s very upsetting for me when you get your projects in late. I get behind with my deadlines and then everyone else gets on *my* case.”

II. Preference Statements: Communicating clearly one’s preferences or desires rather than stating them as demands or forcing others to guess.

Examples

- “My preference is....”
- “If it were just me....”
- “What I’d like is....”
- “It would be helpful to me if....”

III. Purpose Stating: Making known one’s intentions so others do not unknowingly operate at cross-purposes. By supplying information about your aims, a purpose statement enables others to understand what you are about and if possible, help achieve your purpose without needless misunderstanding.

Examples

- “What I’m trying to accomplish is....”
- “I’m hoping to....”
- “I was going to....”
- “I’m in the process of....”
- “My intention was to....”