



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 (staying with what the person is saying), is not a passive activity. It requires being open to hearing others 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 of how the problem is resolved is the critical aspect. We all need to be responsible for working together to resolve issues. No one enjoys having solutions forced upon them. A more respectful way 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. Hearing a broad ideas (not just yours) is crucial. 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.** We all need to take responsibility for behaviour that we know is harmful to others. If you see others acting in destructive ways, point it out. It's not helpful to collude with disrespectful behaviour.

Consider the following questions...

- *As I continue to relate to others in a respectful way, will this increase or decrease them wanting to share their ideas with me? How might this happen?*
- *What will it be like being open to others' 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?*