

Three Keys to Effective Communication

What you say and how you say it

- Use neutral language. Describe what you saw or heard. What sights and sounds would a video cam have recorded? "Edit out" any judgment, criticism or interpretation of what was seen or heard.
- Own the message. I feel, I wish, I hope, I would like to ask. Let the conversation be about your needs or values, not what is (perceived to be) wrong with the other person, or what that person did or did not do.

What you hear and how you hear it

- Try to empathize with what the other person is feeling. By offering empathy you are simply creating a connection with the person - not stating that you agree with what was done or said.
- Acknowledge and make sure you understand the information being given to you. It's often helpful to repeat what you heard to make sure you got it right.

What you do with the information

- Seek to understand the interests (needs, values, wants) of the other person. Ask for help in understanding why they are important to him or her.
- Search for common ground and a better future. Focus on what is desirable and possible now - you can't negotiate the past.

(Adapted from "Three Keys to Effective Communication" by Laurie McCann, University of California, Santa Cruz. Used with permission.)