

## Ten Questions to Improve Your Communication Skills

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The fact is, because most of us were never taught how to communicate in a way that produces desired results, we continue to experience frustration, resistance, conflicts, or breakdowns in our communication. Examine some of the obstacles that may prevent you from reaching certain objectives during the communication process:

- We want to be heard and listened to, but we don't always concentrate on the quality of our message or give the gift of our own attention.
- We want to be understood, yet we often fail to verify that our communication was successful.
- We want acceptance and agreement from others, and we often become consumed with having to be right or to prove our point; we ignore creating a greater outcome together.
- We want some kind of action or response from the other person, but we do not let them know what we really want or how to achieve it.
- We want to understand the message that the other person is communicating to us, yet our ability to listen is tainted by our perceptions of the person speaking and by the outcome we are looking to achieve. So, we often pass judgment on the speaker, evaluating the messenger rather than fully accepting the entire message.

Evolving your communication skills requires taking full responsibility for the outcome of each conversation, responsibility for what you say and for the message that the other person is hearing.

Since we all listen and process information differently, it is crucial to uncover and to become sensitized to the other person's style of communication in order to align it with our own.

To strengthen your communication skills, here are ten questions to ask yourself in order to determine how effectively you communicate:

1. Am I taking full responsibility for the message being heard by the other person? (Remember, it doesn't matter what you say, it only matters what the other person hears.)
2. Did I respect the other person's point of view? Did I have a reaction to what they said that prevented me from listening to their full message?
3. Did the other person feel heard and understood? Did I acknowledge them?
4. If I was asking someone to take a specific action, did I make my request clear?
5. Am I speaking in a way that the other person can understand? Am I communicating in a way that will make the other person want to listen?
6. Am I checking to see if the conversation was successful?
7. Was I communicating openly, without prejudices, expectations, or judgment? Or was I focused on having to be right or on having my point of view be accepted?
8. Did I leave the conversation with some value? Did I allow the other person to contribute?
9. Did I give the person the gift of my listening?
10. If the outcome of the conversation did not meet my expectations, did I learn how to better communicate with that particular person? Did I open up a new and greater possibility that I didn't notice before?