

Rules of communication

Introductionⁱ

Start by telling your partner that what you are going to talk about is important to you. That you expect him/her to listen and to let you finish and that rather than a discussion about the content of what you say, you'd like to receive her/his own awareness about what he/she experiences (feelings, emotions or sensations) regarding what you are telling.

Communication rule #1.

Take/make the time for it.

- Announce what you want to talk about and that you want to take time for it. Ask your partner when the right moment for him/her is and, if necessary, make an appointment for it.
- Get rid of possible disturbances, for instance the TV, mobile phones, radio, family visits, etc.

Communication rule #2.

Really look at each other.

- Seat yourself in such a way that you can look at each other.

Communication rule #3.

Formulate in clear words what you want and what you expect from the other.

Communication rule #4.

Speak from within yourself.

- Use the "I" form and talk about what YOU have felt and experienced, leaving aside for the time being what your partner might feel. For instance: "I want to talk about....., this topic is important to me and you are important to me and that's why I want to let you know what my opinion and feelings are. I expect from you that you can listen to me without interruptions and without discussions or comments about the meaning of my words or the form in which I am telling you. When I am finished speaking to you I'd like to hear how you think and feel about this matter."

Communication rule #5.

Limit the talk to one subject only. Don't bring in any more.

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Communication rule #6.

Translate expressions of blame and reproach into wishes but don't whitewash over yourself or the other.

- Keep contact with yourself and keep therefore talking out of your own awareness and experience. Tell the other how you did experience something, without apologizing yourself or blaming the other.

Communication rule #7.

Don't interrupt the one who is talking.

- One could be more prolix in his/her way of talking, so often this person will need more words, thus more time to express his-/herself.
- Don't interrupt, even if you are bursting with impatience. Don't give any criticism on what the other brings forward (such as: "How can you say so!!") Or the way he/she is using to express it (such as: "Maybe you are right, but the way in which you tell me I don't like.").

Communication rule #8.

Don't discuss about the content of the message.

- To achieve open communication, it is important that the one listening does not discuss the content that the one speaking is bringing forward, since each experience is unique and therefore that reality is not debatable. Instead, your reaction is expected from your own feelings and experiences.

Communication rule #9.

Don't expect from the other the same feelings, opinions or meanings.

- Prepare yourself for a reaction from the other that is totally different from your own opinion. It might even be possible that the other has a totally different experience and awareness from yours. Nevertheless, keep in mind to let the other tell his/her story in a relaxed way.

Communication rule #10.

If there's anything you don't understand, don't blame the other but ask for an explanation.

- You should keep in mind that it is not about the objective truth but about your experience and what the other one experiences. And, as you cannot quarrel about taste, you cannot quarrel about feelings or experiences either. Your own experience is worth just as much as the experience of the other (no more, no less).

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Communication rule #11.

Listen carefully to what the other is really telling you.

- The right attitude to cope with the feelings of the other should be: to listen and relate to what this means to the other. This doesn't imply experiencing the same, nor agreeing with it. You only have to listen.

Communication rule #12.

Negotiate about possible solutions.

- Search together for solutions. What is possible for both of you to do in order to turn the negative experience of one of you, or both of you, into a more positive one? The search for solutions may take the form of a negotiation and that's very normal, because:

A good communication doesn't originate by itself, you need to organize a good communication.

A good relation doesn't originate by itself, you need to organize a good relationship.

ⁱ Loose translation/adaptation from the book "Zin in vrijen... voor mannen. Wat een man kan doen als hij zin heeft en zij niet" by Hannie van Rijsingen