

Collaborative Communication... 10 Tips for Making Your Messages Matter

Communicating effectively is one of the most important ways that nurses and biomedes can improve their relationship. Alexandra Davis, RN, BSN, offers these tips for enhancing your relationship.

1. **Always introduce yourself.** Say who you are, what you do and why you are there. For example, "I'm Alexandra Davis, a nurse educator, and I need to understand your department's goals regarding this issue."
2. **Think before you speak.** Don't just react. Stop and consider what a person has just said, and then choose your words carefully. Avoid words that put people on the defensive.
3. **Use words like "please" and "thank you"** to convey your appreciation for the other person's involvement in the interaction. Use what some



- people call "wiggle words," such as "are you OK with that?" "Should we look at this another way?"
4. **Be aware of nonverbal communication** (posture, eye contact, tone of voice, body language, gestures). Saying "thank you" with your back turned to the person and your arms crossed over your chest doesn't express gratitude. Be aware that your body is communicating while you're speaking and match your gestures to the intent of your words.
 5. **Listen closely.** Any time you're willing to first open yourself up to another person's perspective, you've created a receptive audience.
 6. **Do more listening than talking.** This allows the other person to feel "heard" on a matter and gives you the chance to think his or her ideas through.
 7. **Paraphrase what you hear** back to the speaker to ensure that you fully understand the intended message. This is particularly important when using technical terms that are unique to your clinical setting.
 8. **Always make eye contact** so that the other person knows that you're interested in what is being said.
 9. **Don't interrupt.** An interruption is basically a stop sign—it halts the conversation and says to the other person "what I have to say is more important."
 10. **Don't multitask.** Don't peer at a chart while trying to have a conversation with a technician delivering equipment. Don't talk to your colleagues around the patient without including her or him in the conversation. If you're doing other things while talking, you're sending the message that the conversation is not important.

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