



Communicating During Difficult Situations

Communicating is something we do everyday. It can be as simple as saying “good morning,” a slight head nod or a more in-depth conversation with a family member or coworker. We communicate with words, actions and body language. Each person that you communicate with has his or her own set of unique experiences that allows him or her to interpret situations, words and meanings differently. These unique experiences can lead to misunderstandings during communicating.

There are many times when you will have to communicate during difficult situations, such as talking to your child’s teacher or daycare provider, working with another parent, talking to your boss or coworkers or dealing with a spouse or significant other. However, there are steps that you can take to help ease tension during difficult situations.

First, remember to work on you first! You are the only person that you can control in the situation. Remembering that you can only control yourself will help you keep your emotions and feelings in mind so that the situation does not become worse. Some other helpful steps you can take include taking deep breaths, eliminating distractions or outside noise, closing your eyes

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and imagining yourself in your favorite place, listening to calming music or trying to relax your muscles. These techniques can be done before entering a difficult situation to help you control your emotions and prepare for a difficult talk, or they can be done during or after to help calm you or the situation down.

Focus on what you really want as a next step in helping your communications go smoothly. When you find yourself becoming angry or getting off track, stop and pay attention to your motives. Ask yourself, "What does my behavior tell me about my motives?" Then clarify what you really want. Ask yourself, "What do I want for myself? What do I want for others? What do I want from this situation?" Then finally ask, "How would I behave if this were what I really wanted?" This last question will help you determine if the outcome you have in your mind is really what you want to happen.

Expressing what you want during a difficult situation can be very hard. It is easy to get lost in past issues or emotions. There are some steps that you can follow to make it easier to communicate with others during difficult situations. First be direct, specific and brief. Try to stick to one issue at a time and avoid bringing up past situations. Next focus on feelings, not blame. Don't blame others for your actions or feelings and avoid using phrases like "you always" or "you never." Those types of words only put people in a defensive mood, and remember, you are the only one that you can control. A large part of communicating effectively is listening. Listen to the response you are given. Allow the person to tell the entire story or situation before responding. When you do respond, repeat back what you heard and ask questions about anything that is unclear or that you don't understand. This will give the person a chance to correct you if you have misunderstood anything and will make sure that each of you is on the same page during the discussion.

Finally, when communicating during difficult situations, be realistic about your expectations and communicate them clearly. Remember that you can't force someone to think or act a certain way. The situation may not resolve itself immediately; it may take several

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meetings or conversations to see any results or changes. Keep an open mind and be willing to try new suggestions or ideas. Most importantly, remember to keep your end result in mind.

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Sources:

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