Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

A note on effective communication

Communication is an important part of maintaining a healthy relationship. While most people will think that talking is the most important part of effective communication, there's more to it than verbalizing your thoughts to each other.



Effective communication involves active listening, and nonverbal communication. While communication in relationships might be easier for some people, there are some ways for you to improve communication with each other. Below are some suggestions.

Listen well. There are differences between hearing someone talk and listening to someone talk. Practice active listening with your partner. Offer him or her your complete attention when they are talking and acknowledge what your partner is saying.

Make time. It's hard to get caught up with our daily lives that we often neglect important relationships. Just as you set aside time to do things, make communicating with your partner one of them.

Set aside distractions. When communicating with your partner, turn the TV or the computer off. This will show that you're giving your partner your full and undivided attention and that you're ready to listen.

Ask for clarification. When you're receiving unclear messages from your partner, ask him or her for clarification. For example, it's alright to tell your partner, "You say that nothing's wrong, but you sound unhappy. I only want to know what you're feeling so that I can help."

Respect each other's privacy. There may be some topics that your partner feels uneasy talking to you about. Remember that it's not about an issue of trust, but rather a need for privacy. People have different levels of comfort and it's important to give your partner that respect.

The suggestions above can not only help you avoid sending your partner mixed or unclear messages, but will also provide you with the tools to effectively listen to and understand what your partner is communicating. By following these cues, you can hone your skills to improve the way you communicate with each other.

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