

Effective Communication

Complicate it might, but effective communication is core to healthy, successful relationships. To develop closeness and deal with conflict it is important to communicate authentically with each other about our needs and feelings. This is not always easy! Read on for some tips to improve your communication.

According to Marshall Rosenberg, a clinical psychologist and international expert on conflict resolution and author of *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, good communication means clarifying what matters to us instead of focusing on what's wrong with the other person and taking responsibility for our own [needs and feelings](#) [1].

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) means communicating without:

- Expressing blame and guilt
- Making demands
- Inviting contentious debate

A very effective way to do this is to use non-debatable statements. Using non-debatable statements is more than simply making [?I-statements](#) [2]?. It includes the following multiple steps:

- Expressing specific observations about a situation or concern, not our judgments or evaluations. Ex. ?When you were thirty minutes late for our appointment??
- Disclosing our feelings about the situation or concern, i.e., genuine statements about our own emotions and sensations, not our thoughts, or simply beliefs about what we think others have done to us. Ex. ?I felt frustrated and annoyed??
- Identifying what we need or value. Ex. ?Because I really want to get this project done on time and I wanted to have your input to move it along?
- Requesting specific actions that would start to meet our needs or support our values, not demanding character changes or making ultimatums. Ex. ?Would you be willing to meet thirty minutes longer now to cover the topics we had planned to go over??

Who can tell you that what you feel or value is wrong? When our observations do not contain assumptions and judgments they are hard to invalidate. When you communicate with such non-debatable statements, without guilt, demand, blame, or shame others will be more likely to understand and respond non-defensively to what

matters to you.

Girl you left your dishes in the sink again.

It's only three dishes.

I don't care.

It's not that serious.

We have ants so it is serious!

There's three dishes.

There's ants!

Three dishes.

There's ants!

Three.

Let's talk about non-violent communication. At its core it's about connecting to one's humanity and to what one is feeling and needing. It's incredibly effective in relationships. Don't worry! I will show you great ways to respond in [Healthy Heels' Declassified Relationship Survival Guide](#).

There are literally millions of ways I can respond but non-violent communication would ask me to respond with compassion, empathy and curiosity.

So I might say...

Whoa. It seems like you're really upset that I didn't wash my dishes right after I ate. I'm sorry.

Then I might say...

Thank you. That's all I wanted you to do - apologize and understand where I was coming from.

Once you actually listen to what someone needs the other person just might listen to you too.

Techniques we often use are reflecting feelings:

"It sounds like you're upset."

Asking for more information:

"Is there anything else you would like me to know?"

Checking in:

"I heard this was bothering you. Is it true?"

"I understand."

Expressing understanding

"I hear ya."

Expressing love

"I care about you girl."

And looking for solutions

"I know we both want things to be different. We should definitely compromise."

Well these are great ways to communicate to your friend roommate and even your loved ones. If you're struggling with what to say refer to Healthy Heels Declassified Relationship Survival Guide!

Source URL: <https://caps.unc.edu/self-help/relationships/effective-communication>

Links

[1] http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/pdf_files/feelings_needs.pdf

[2] http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/pdf_files/4part_nvc_process.pdf