

Relationships: Choose Words That Work

Choosing the right words at the right time can mean the difference between cooperation and conflict. Communication is key to the success of any relationship—as well as a skill that almost anyone can improve upon. The following tips are offered:

- Be respectful; talk in a moderate tone. Raising your voice or yelling is not productive.
 - Pick your time. Making even a simple request when someone is obviously busy—heading into a conference at work or balancing grocery bags while supervising children—is likely to result in a “no.”
 - Keep language simple and to the point; offer a judgment only if asked.
- Share responsibility by choosing an “I” message, rather than a “you” message. For example, “I worry about running out of gas on the highway.” usually draws a more positive response from a spouse or teenage child than an angry “YOU never fill the car with gas.” At work, saying “It’s been quiet today, and I’ve gotten so much done. Thank you.” may do more to help resolve a problem than “YOUR voice carries, and I can’t get anything done.”

Polishing up communications is important. Once something hurtful has been said, backtracking can be difficult.

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