

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

SETTING THE STAGE:

Calm Down and Find the Right Time. Give yourself time to organize your thoughts and to calm your emotions enough so that you are not speaking just from anger. If you are upset, tell them you need some time, and state when you would like to have the conversation.

Be Brief. No one wants to hear a lecture. When we keep it brief, the other person stays in the conversation. Do not drag in past arguments or issues that do not relate to the present incident. This dilutes the current concern, and the person will become defensive.

Be Specific. Figure out what exactly it is that you want to say before you say anything. Avoid generalizations such as “You never do what you say you’ll do” or “I can never trust you.” Focus on the facts without making assumptions or jumping to conclusion.

Show Empathy. Take time to understand the other person’s point of view, and express it to them. This shows that you care enough about them to try to understand their point of view, even if you disagree, and they will be more likely to accept that you have something important to say.

Accept Partial Responsibility. “It takes two to tango” is a polite way of saying that both parties in a conflict are likely to be less than perfect. Acknowledging your part in the problem goes a long way.

THE CONVERSATION:

Be Positive. Always begin a serious conversation with something very positive. This not only helps the listener, but helps you remember that you do appreciate something about the other person.

I Feel. Acknowledge that your feelings are your own. Do not blame the other person for how you feel (“You make me so mad”). This will always put the other person on the defensive. Your feelings are your own. The following phrase is the best example of how to communicate your feelings.

- “When you _____ I feel _____ (sad, mad, worried, scared etc.)”

I Want. It is now time to state what you want, and to share what you would like from your loved one. Try to make your request reasonable and something your partner can actually do.

- “I would like it if you/we could _____”.

Be Positive. Always end with something positive. You can end the conversation positively by sharing:

- How your relationship/their life may be improved.
- Something positive about them.
- An offer to help them accomplish the task, to help things move in a positive direction.

(Adapted from Community Reinforcement and Family Training Support and Prevention: CRAFT-SP)