

Brush Up on Your Communication Skills

Communication takes practice, and after a year of social distancing, many of us may feel a little rusty. Try these techniques for brushing up on your communication skills:

- ▶ **Be polite and kind.** Say please and thank you. Take the time to ask how the other person is doing or chat briefly about their day.
- ▶ **Create rapport.** Rapport develops when you feel you are connecting with another person in a conversation. Foster these feelings by making eye contact and listening without interrupting. Non-verbal cues, such as nodding, smiling, or laughing when appropriate will also create rapport.
- ▶ **Mirror the other person's emotions.** Mirroring emotions involves staying on the same emotional wavelength as the other person. For instance, if a person is projecting feelings of sadness or disappointment, a response that is kind or empathetic will create a better connection than responding with cheerfulness or joking around.
- ▶ **Know your facts.** Whether you're giving a presentation or having a difficult conversation, it's important to be clear on the subject matter. Do research when you can. If you can't, ask open-ended questions to elicit more information so you can clearly understand the situation.



- ▶ **Be constructive.** If you're giving feedback, avoid being judgmental and try to keep your emotions out of your response. Point out something positive about the process the person followed or the effort they put into a project, even if the result is disappointing.
- ▶ **Stay focused.** Put your phone away unless it's needed to access pertinent information. Keep your attention on the other person.
- ▶ **Set boundaries.** If you are too tired to talk about a difficult subject, or if the topic is making you stressed or angry, it's okay to take a step back. Ask for a break in the conversation until you are in a better place emotionally. When problem solving, pausing the discussion until you can gather more information or think through the situation may be appropriate.

After a year of social distancing and video conferencing, adjusting to in-person conversation may be difficult. LifeMatters is available 24/7/365 to help. Call today.

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