

## Effective Communication Tips

*"The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you."*  
(1 Peter 2:17 NIV)

Words have great healing power and are life-giving substances. They can wound or kill. With our words, we can hurt ourselves as well as our relationships with others.

Did you know that what comes out of your mouth reflects what is in your heart? Scripture says, **"The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words."** (Proverbs 15:28)

### Speak at Your Own Risk

It has been estimated that on a weekly basis, the average person speaks more than 200,000 words-enough to fill a 500 page book!

Words are powerful and extremely concentrated! When spoken in too-large quantities, they can affect emotions and attitudes. Words germinate readily when spoken; therefore, we must be careful in what we say and how we say it.

It is not always right to speak out and express what pops into our minds. Instead, there are times when we should bite our tongues and keep quiet. Scripture says, **"Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing."** (Proverbs 12:18)

If you realize that your tongue is out of control, make a commitment right now-at this very moment to do the following:

1. **Refuse to participate in, listen to, or tolerate negative things (backbiting and gossip) said about another person.** If you tell people you will not participate, they will stop including you in these types of conversations. So, speak up!
2. **Watch your tone and attitude.** Encourage and boost the self-esteem of those you talk to by allowing words of praise and encouragement to come out of your mouth. The tone and attitude behind your words can work miracles or do far greater damage than the words themselves.

3. **Think positively.** Look on the bright side of things. Develop a positive mental attitude about people. Believe it or not, this will brighten your personality and bring you contentment.
4. **Practice being patient.** I know this is hard to do sometimes, but when you are stuck in traffic or in the cashier's line, find something productive to think about or do-view your emails, read the headings on a magazine, plan the rest of your day, etc. How about actually talking to someone in line-not complaining about how long it is taking; but really engaging in a conversation or two?
5. **Learn to cope.** A common definition of insanity is "doing the things you've always done, yet expecting the result to be different". We live in an imperfect world, yet we continue to expect it to somehow be perfect. Stop wasting precious time and energy! Instead, consider even the smallest annoyance a challenge to overcome. Just think of the sweet sense of accomplishment you will receive once you have succeeded in tackling it.
6. **Stop whining and complaining.** Whining and complaining are energy-draining. Liberal doses of this highly toxic stuff leads to bitterness and ultimately poor health. Introduce a chronic complainer into a festive gathering and you end up with a mass exodus of the guests. Avoid complaining about things or people you can't control. Think of solutions and strategies to handle the things you can control without complaining.
7. **Respond graciously to criticism.** Give yourself a few moments to think of your response before you charge in "mouth-first". Re-word your statement to be more effective. Make your point graciously and in a professional and convincing manner.
8. **When you've put your "foot in your mouth"....** Let's face it, each one of us has blurted out a tactless or tasteless remark from time to time. These rare occasions usually happen before we've had a chance to consider the impact our words will have on others. To overcome this debilitating tendency, apologize as swiftly and sincerely as possible and simply say the words you wish you had said.
9. **Practice makes perfect.** Train yourself to think and act differently. Prepare ahead of time by practicing what you will say in various situations. When you know you are about to engage in a confrontation that will test your temper, write out what you will say and practice it out loud before you meet with the other person.
10. **Forgive yourself as well as others.** When you "blow it", don't panic. Forgive yourself first, and then make amends to the other person as well. Every person needs forgiveness and needs to forgive. Our first response when others hurt us is usually a reactive one of resentment, revenge and avoidance. Forgiveness allows us to be proactive and to put all the hurt and injustice of the past behind us once and for all.

Communication is a means to an end, not the end itself. Understanding the purpose of communication can assist you in resolving conflicts and handling disagreements.

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