

Conflict and Communication

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Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29

Good communication with others is important to God as it improves relationships and helps them thrive and grow. Our words and how we speak to others is a reflection of our hearts. In Psalm 19:14 David asks that the words from his mouth and the meditations of his heart be pleasing to God. Like us, he knew the challenges of living with others, yet understood that God's love has the ability to guide and transform what is said, and how it is said. Our words have the power to speak life over another...even when we are asking for something.

Managing conflict is essential in every arena of life. It is a skill that strengthens and develops with practice. The acronym DEARMAN is a valuable tool that can be used when communicating your needs.

Step 1: Describe the situation. Stick to the facts. No judgmental statements. Be objective.

Example: The kids need help with their homework and the dishes are piled up.

Step 2: Express clearly how you feel or what you believe about the situation. Do not expect the person to read your mind or know how you feel. Own your feelings using an I statement to prevent the person from feeling blamed or attacked.

Example: I feel overwhelmed with having to help the kids with their homework and cleaning up the dishes.

Step 3: Assert. Ask for exactly what you want or need from the person. Be clear and concise. This puts you and the other person on the same page and nothing is left to interpretation.

Example: Could you take care of the dishes while I make sure the kids get their homework done?

Step 4: Reinforce the other person. Identify something positive or rewarding that would happen for the other person if he or she gives the response you want. Recognize also that there may not be any gains for them. A genuine thank you and words of appreciation are appropriate and go a long way.

Example: If you do the dishes, we will have more time to spend together and could watch that movie you have been wanting to see. Thank you for your help!

Step 5: Mindful. Stay mindful of the objective and ignore attacks and diversions. Be mindful of the other person's feelings as well and where they are coming from. It is easy for conversation to get heated and for tempers to flare when discussing wants. Colossians 3:8 is a good reminder to avoid this temptation and to keep in step with the Spirit. It says to rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Step 6: Appear confident. Use a confident voice tone and display a confident physical manner and posture with appropriate eye contact. Body language is often louder than words. Appearing confident with your words and body language eliminates mixed messages and communicates that what is being said is important.

Step 7 Negotiate. Be willing to give to get. Maintain your boundaries, but offer to do something else or solve the problem another way. Compromise.

Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. Philippians 4:8. As followers of Christ, we are called to be choosy with our thoughts and what we put into our minds. As we align our hearts with the very heart of God, we receive greater peace and joy personally and within our relationships.