

COMMUNICATION – GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

Getting your message across isn't always easy, Good communication skills can help you to avoid conflict and to solve problems.

WHOLE MESSAGES

One of the most effective ways of communicating is to use whole messages. This is particularly useful when you need to raise an issue that is difficult to talk about, or makes you feel uncomfortable. A whole message involves expressing how you think and feel, and what you want.

It Consists Of Four Parts:

1. **OBSERVATIONS:** Describe what happened (e.g. 'The other day when Fred came over you didn't stop and talk to him.').
2. **THOUGHTS** Your beliefs, opinions or interpretation of what happened (e.g. 'I thought it looked rude - as though you don't like him.').
3. **FEELINGS** How you feel about the situation: (e.g. 'I felt embarrassed and uncomfortable.').
4. **WANTS** What you would like to happen in the situation: (e.g. 'Next time he comes over, I'd like you to say 'hi' and to make an effort to talk to him.').

HOW IT WORKS

Fred is feeling angry. He is due to go for his driving test next week, and for the past month his dad has been promising to take him out driving, but it never seemed to happen. Fred feels frustrated because he needs the practice before he goes for the test.

On Thursday Fred came home from college and asked his dad if they could go for a drive. His dad said he couldn't because he had some work to do.

Well, Fred just saw red and exploded: "You don't give a damn about me. You are such a liar! You never do what you say you're going to do..."

In return his dad got all fired up, called him a 'spoilt brat' and said that he can't think about anything but himself.

Let's take a look at how Fred could have communicated with his dad using a whole message:

Fred's observations: In the past month you have said that you would take me out driving on about four occasions, but each time something came up and we didn't go.

Fred's thoughts/feelings: I feel upset that you've cancelled so many times. I know you are busy, but this is important to me. I'm going for my test next week, and I'm worried that I'll fail if I don't get some more practice.

Fred's wants: I would really like it if we could make a time to go for a drive, and if you could stick to the arrangement.

NOW OVER TO YOU

Learning to communicate effectively takes a bit of practice. Think of a situation that you have experienced, where you needed to communicate with someone about issues of concern? (perhaps something that you need to resolve at the moment).

1. Describe the situation, and who you need to communicate with

2. Now write the whole message:

Observations: what actually happened.

Thoughts and /or feelings.

Wants: what would you like to happen.

TIP - If you find it difficult to say it directly to the person, write it down on paper first. This can help you to clarify what you want to say and how you can say it.