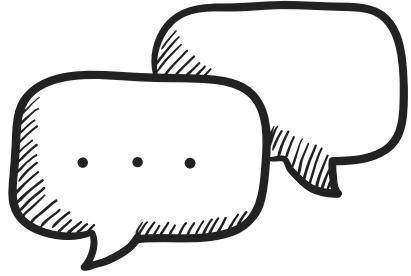


HEALTHY COMMUNICATION



A practical guide to communicating clearly, calmly and respectfully—even during difficult conversations.

STEP 1: PAUSE BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Before responding, ask yourself:

- Am I calm enough to speak respectfully?
- Do I understand what I'm feeling?
- Is this a good time to talk, or do I need a break?

STEP 2: NAME WHAT YOU'RE FEELING

Anger often covers other emotions: Frustrated Hurt Overwhelmed Disrespected

Anxious Angry Sad Other: _____

STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE SITUATION (FACTS ONLY)

Describe what happened without blaming or exaggerating:

STEP 4: USE AN "I FEEL" STATEMENT

I feel _____ when _____ because _____

STEP 5: STATE WHAT YOU NEED

Be clear and realistic about what you need or are asking for:

STEP 6: LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

While the other person speaks:

Do not interrupt Listen to understand Reflect back what you hear

What I heard them say:

STEP 7: CHOOSE A HEALTHY RESPONSE

Continue discussion Take a break Ask for clarification Agree on next steps Seek Support

My next step:

STEP 8: REFLECT AFTER THE CONVERSATION

What went well:

What I could try differently next time:

HELPFUL COMMUNICATION PHRASES

Words that reduce defensiveness and keep conversations productive

Using calmer language helps prevent conflict from escalating.

Instead of... → Try saying...

- **"You never listen."** → "I don't feel heard, and I'd like to explain."
- **"You're overreacting."** → "I see this is important to you."
- **"This is your fault."** → "I'm trying to understand what happened."
- **"Calm down."** → "Let's take a moment to slow this down."
- **"You always do this."** → "This has happened a few times, and I'd like to talk about it."
- **"I'm done talking."** → "I need a break so I can respond better."



LISTENING TOOLS THAT LOWER TENSION

What to say when the other person is upset

- **"I want to make sure I understand you."**
- **"What I hear you saying is..."**
- **"That sounds frustrating."**
- **"I didn't realize you felt that way."**



Feeling heard often reduces anger more than being "right."

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If communication is connected to fear, intimidation, or harm:

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – Call or Text**
- **911 – For immediate danger**

Support is confidential and help is available.



**Livingston County
Health Center**
YOUR LOCAL LINK TO PUBLIC HEALTH