

Building Communication Skills

Sometimes, regardless of how strong your relationship is, conflict arises. In these scenarios, it is helpful to think about what type of communicator you are, and whether that style works for you and your partner. When we are **assertive**, we speak up to represent our rights, opinions, and preferences, while also respecting those of the other person. Assertive tones are respectful and avoid putting the other person on the defensive. Assertive communication is more likely to result in a resolution of the conflict, a negotiation that both people perceive as fair, and less likely to result in hurt, anger, or resentment. Finding your assertive voice takes practice.

What to say (The Three Fs):

1. Statement of **Fact** (describe the situation)
2. Statement of **Feeling** (describe the emotions you are experiencing)
3. Statement of **Fair Request** (describe what you would like to happen instead)

Some additional strategies to use:

1. **Ask yourself:** What are my needs, desires, concerns, or issues?
2. **Choose** to act in a way that respects your needs, rights, and opinions
3. **Use “I” language** instead of blaming language.
Example: “I feel...” rather than “you make me feel...”
Example: I would like if you ...
4. **Be specific** and accurate with language choice (slightly irritated vs. enraged)
5. **Be empathetic and sensitive** to the rights and feelings of the other person involved
Example: “I know you have been through a lot. Yet, I feel slightly frustrated when you speak to me that way.”
6. **Listen effectively** by summarizing the other person’s viewpoint
Example: “So, what I hear you say is...”