

HANDOUT 1

IMPROVING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1. Effective communication skills are fundamental to the success of any goal you set out to pursue.

2. Communication is a two way street that involves two simultaneous processes: talking and listening. Below are several points to consider when having conversations:
 - A. Learn to Listen: Listening and Hearing are very different. When Listening to the response you receive make sure to understand how the response is being spoken. Confirm the message given and the message received.

 - B. Empathizing is the ability to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. Empathize with the responders' point of view. Stay in tune with your emotions as well. This will help you understand another person's emotions and why they may respond in a certain way.

 - C. Focus on the meaning of what you want to communicate. Be aware of the message you are sending. Make eye contact. Present information in a way that its' meaning can and will be clearly understood. When having your conversation consider some of the following: culture difference, past experience and attitudes.

 - D. Treat people equally and maintain a positive attitude. People enjoy talking with a person who is cheerful and outgoing.

An effective listener:

- Looks at the person speaking
- Reacts responsively
- Pays close attention to the other
- Does not interrupt the speaker
- Is sensitive to the speaker
- Does not rush the speaker
- Ask appropriate questions
- Is emotionally controlled
- Has no hidden agenda

An ineffective listener:

- Always interrupts
- Jumps to conclusions
- Makes moral judgments
- Keeps finishing the speaker's sentences
- Is inattentive
- Is always writing and taking notes
- Changes the subject
- Is unresponsive
- Is impatient
- Can't control emotions
- 'Fidgets' nervously