

Seven skills for good communication...

5 Advices from personal trainer Neil James
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PARDON?

What do you mean?

Please explain?

10 Three simple phrases that could change your life, promises personal trainer Neil James.

Improving communication skills, based on the art of listening, becomes even more important during difficult times.

Although no one can talk their way out if there is a crisis, improving communication — at home and in business — can make difficult times more bearable.

15 Better communications could even make the difference between life and death, judging by the high number of farm suicides.

Everyone thinks and feels that they're a good communicator. But how often have you had the following conversation:

20 **“But I thought you said...no, what I meant was,” or worse still: “You never listen...”**

So why not check whether your communication skills are as effective as you would like to believe?

More bearable

Neil picks out seven essential ingredients in a recipe for good communication:

25 First, take a large helping of commitment. “It’s important people make the ommitment to find the time and create the circumstances where communication can flourish. The right moment is priceless, the wrong one worthless. Communication is similar to a dance; both partners should engage and react to each other’s moves.

30 Next, prepare a large dollop of honesty, because lack of honesty sours good communication. Suspicion and mistrust are all barriers that stop your message getting through to the other person.

Combine the honesty with a good helping of responsibility. One popular misconception about communication is that it’s a shared responsibility: a 50/50 process. If a communicator wishes to be understood, it is 100% his or her responsibility to ensure
35 their message has been received.

Another prized ingredient is the ability to listen. Although most people would describe themselves as good listeners, it’s a skill too few people have mastered.

Also, work plenty of specific language into the mixture. If someone criticises you, ask for a specific example of when, where and how the offending behaviour took place. If you're giving criticism, remember it's clearer and more constructive to say, not that *someone is lazy*, but e.g. *rather last Wednesday the person should have finished cleaning out the grain store before knocking off work.*

A key rule is to challenge someone's behaviour rather than launching a personal attack.

As with all good recipes, keep it simple and concentrate on the matter in hand. In discussion, particularly heated discussion, it's easy to become side-tracked by separate issues unrelated to the main topic. Make sure you stick with the subject you first wanted to discuss.

Deal with one issue at a time and resolve additional upsets separately.

Don't forget the anti-prejudice powder. Keep an open mind; communication based on prejudice is often flawed and bitter.

Seek feedback

Now add salt and pepper. In the recipe for better communication, that means looking for **feedback**.

Always check that you first understand the other person's point of view before seeking to help them understand yours. In looking to be understood, monitor people's reactions to your views. It pays to ensure you have received all the information before you offer feedback.

A few cook's tips on how to put the recipe together: don't fidget or interrupt but do try to maintain eye contact and use humour where appropriate. Most important of all, if you don't understand something, don't keep quiet — seek clarification.

So, when it comes to good communication skills are you blessed or possessed?

DANGER SIGNS

But I thought you said. .“

No what I meant was...”

You never listen to me...

We never talk anymore...”

Why don't you ever tell me anything?”

All you do is complain.”