

SELF HELP

Communication – a two-way street

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Discussions about love permeate the media. While physical attraction is important for romantic love to flourish, communication is the means by which couples express love and negotiate for individual and joint needs.

Some couples are more successful at communicating about important matters than others.

These couples are likely to use good communication skills that reflect mutual respect, a quest for understanding and a desire to work things out together.

Assertive communication and active listening are two key skills that facilitate

clear communication between parties, resulting in fewer misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

Assertive communication involves speaking about one's own experience, thoughts, feelings, and needs rather than attributing them to someone else.

For example, if Pete tells Rose, "You made me angry when you stood me up last night," she is likely to feel attacked and respond with a counter-attack, such as "Well, you always stand me up!"

On the other hand, if Pete assertively states, "I'm hurt and angry that you didn't show up last night," Rose doesn't feel the need to defend herself and can apologize for her actions.



For a connection to be made between two people in a conversation, both people need to understand what is meant in the same way.

Active listening is the process of reflecting back to the speaker what was understood from the speaker's communication, so that the message can be amended, restated, or repeated if misunderstood.

This process may seem to slow down or impede the communication process, but in the long run, it may accelerate it because of fewer misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

In the first example of Pete's attacking communication to Rose, she could actively listen to his anger and respond, "I'm hearing that you're angry because

you thought that I stood you up last night."

And he could agree, feeling heard and understood, which would likely decrease the intensity of his anger.

"How could you do that to me?" he might say.

And Rose could apologize and explain that her father was hospitalized with a sudden heart attack, and she could not use her cell phone on the hospital grounds to inform Pete.

Pete's anger is now gone, as he understands what happened and why.

Assertive communication and active listening are two fundamental communication skills that convey an attitude of mutual respect and caring between partners.

So perhaps you and your romantic partner could experiment with them and see what happens.

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