

## 4 Ways to Improve Your Communication Skills

4 Ways to Improve Your Communication Skills Have you ever been to a function in a room full of strangers and found yourself lost for words? It can be a very lonely experience, especially if you intend to date.

The art of introducing yourself to others and creating small talk may come naturally for some, but most people confess to feeling shy, embarrassed and don't know where to start. Your inner ambitions are crying out for you to relate to others ? just as other people are deeply interested to know you.

The key to knowing where to start is to understand the four levels of communication.

### 1. Small Talk

When you meet someone for the first time, the safest place to start is to talk about surface issues. For instance, make a comment about the weather, current events or the surroundings you are in.

This is called ?small talk?, and is used to ?size up? the other person to determine the comfort zone between the two of you. There is no need to disclose any personal information with the other person at this stage, as this initial interaction assists you to determine how ?safe? they are on your first meeting.

If you are comfortable engaging each other at a surface level you can easily slip into the next level of communication: fact disclosure.

### 2. Fact Disclosure

This level of communication is slightly deeper than small talk in that you disclose facts about yourself without triggering topics of emotional interest.

The purpose of fact disclosure is to find out if you have something in common. You can use these common areas to build a bridge of friendship later on. You may want to talk about your career or occupation, hobbies, where you live, etc.

Avoid topics like marriage and divorce, politics, sex and religion in this second level of communication. With a little creative thinking, and the use of open-ended questions, you should easily find a topic that interests you both.

If you find a topic of mutual interest then you may progress to the next level of communication: sharing viewpoints and opinions.

### 3. Share Viewpoints and Opinions

Once you have established that the other person is ?safe? through small talk, and have found areas of common interest, you can build rapport by sharing your opinions and viewpoints.

By sharing your viewpoints and opinions you allow yourself to become vulnerable to the scrutiny and objections of the other person, so you would only enter this level of communication once you were comfortable that you both share positive feelings through the first two levels.

Some people give an opinion about politics or religion as their starting point at this level. But you may firstly want to comment on the things you have in common that you found through fact disclosure. This is a safe place to start.

Be prepared to listen to the opinions of your new friend. It is just as important to listen to their viewpoint as much as you expect them to listen to yours. This will enable your friendship to survive.

Make sure you don't use your opinions as a form of ?character assassination? of other people. You may be thought of as a negative person and this may cause your new friend to distance himself/herself from you.

Over time you will learn to find a safe distance in your communication levels, and if you are forming a bond of friendship you may eventually enter into the fourth level of communication: sharing personal feelings.

### 4. Share Personal Feelings

Only solid friendships survive time to enter the fourth level of communication. After building upon trust, finding things in common and listening to the viewpoints and opinions of others, you may be able to share your personal feelings.

This is where an acquaintance becomes a genuine friend. You know that despite having differing opinions and viewpoints you can trust your friend's judgement, and may go to them for advice.

Things of deep value to you can be shared without feeling threatened. You listen closely to each other without the need to 'solve' your friend's problem. You are happy to reflect their feelings back to them, forming a bond of empathy and compassion between the two of you.

At this level of communication, it is important that you provide a little distance between yourself and your friend. If the distinction between yourself and your friend becomes unrecognizable, it is possible for your relationship to go sour. If you know how to handle your own feelings, attitudes and behaviors while maintaining your friendship at this level, you will build a successful friendship that can last a lifetime.

By using these four levels of communication with prospective 'dates' you will find that they will become interested in you and want to get to know you all the more.

## About the Author

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