

Communication Toolkit

Communication patterns



This worksheet is designed to assist you in developing your communication skills to better manage your relationships.

If you are having trouble understanding this worksheet or need support, please call a MensLine Australia counsellor on 1300 78 99 78.

Things to think about

Communication is an essential part of any healthy relationship, and most of us need to learn more about how to communicate effectively. It isn't just about words; it's tone of voice, facial expressions, body language and even silence. Unresolved repeated conflict is like rust – it can corrode something that was once fresh and strong. Just like rust, you cannot just leave it and hope it goes away: if you deal with conflict properly it can make a relationship stronger and more trusting.

Understanding your own individual way of arguing is a great start.

There are four main types of unhelpful arguing patterns:

- **Attacking** – attempting to control the outcome by use of force
- **Defending** – blocking another person's (perceived) attack
- **Deflecting** – directing attention away from you
- **Freezing** – feeling unable to respond because you are overwhelmed or frightened

Activity

Thinking about your responses in arguments, which of these unhelpful patterns do you find yourself doing? Think about your behaviours when you are arguing.

Tick the circles that relate to the way you argue.

- ☐ Shouting
- ☐ Make out it's nothing to do with you
- ☐ Laugh it off
- ☐ Become so upset you forget what you were arguing about
- ☐ Name calling
- ☐ Thinking about what you will say next while they are speaking
- ☐ Not taking the issue seriously
- ☐ Find your mind racing, unable to think clearly
- ☐ Mocking or being sarcastic
- ☐ Make excuses for your behaviour
- ☐ Change the subject
- ☐ Unable to speak
- ☐ Physically attack the other person
- ☐ Refuse to talk about the issue
- ☐ Find something else that is more important to do
- ☐ Become physically immobile, weak or shaking

- ☐ Attacking response
- ☐ Defensive response
- ☐ Deflective response
- ☐ Freeze response

Communication Toolkit

Communication patterns



Reflect on how you respond in an argument.
Do you use many of these behaviours, or mostly
one group, or do you use other things?

**What seems to be the main way that you
respond?**

**Once you know this, what could you do differently
in an argument?**

This worksheet is part of a series on anger management, communication and self-care. You may find it useful to complete other worksheets in this series. For more information or assistance, call MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78