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# Bethel Olentangy

## Psychological Services

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### GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY COMMUNICATION (FOR COUPLES, FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS & COLLEAGUES)

1. Be **tactful**. Talk at least as tactfully to your partner, friend or colleague as you would to your neighbor.
2. Choose your **timing** for anything you wish to bring up-when the other person will be best able to hear you.
3. Keep to the **present**-do not go back in time to things that happened a long time ago, and things which have been discussed many times before. Resolve things once and for all, and go on.
4. Use **"I" statements** rather than "you" statements, which tend to be accusatory. "I" statements tend to allow you to reflect your feelings and perceptions without imposing them on the other person, e.g. "I feel angry and hurt about what you just said."
5. When there is an issue you wish to discuss, remember that the **two of you are a team**, and thus it is important to come up with **constructive ideas for change**, not simply tearing down a team member. "What I would suggest as one alternative that would feel better to me is...". "I would also like to hear your ideas."
6. **Honesty** is always important, but again, tact is of the utmost importance. Anything can be said as long as it is said gently and tactfully. The other person will be able to hear it better, and thus the two of you will remain on the same team rather than opposing teams.
7. Remember that this is a person you love and/or care about: treat them in the way that you would want to be treated, which includes always being **respectful** (this includes even when it is a child).
8. **Admit when you are wrong and apologize**. We are all human, and we all make mistakes. This will score big points.
9. **Do not take the blame for everything if it is not your fault: stand up for your feelings**, as it is very important for your partner to know how you genuinely feel. Assigning blame is rarely worth much expenditure of time: the real issue is finding a solution to the problem. If you find yourselves stuck on trying to decide whose fault it is, agree to both take half the blame, and go on to solutions.
10. It is important in a healthy relationship that both people feel that they have equal power. Find ways that this can be balanced in your relationship. Do not allow the other person to either take all of the power, nor give up their own power. This balance will make a significant difference in the amount of love you both feel, and usually has a big positive impact on sex life. **Only equal partners can feel free to express themselves healthily in**

**a sexual way.** Other ways that equal power can manifest is in sharing housework and childcare responsibilities, and take turns initiating in almost everything.

11. **Hear your partner out.** Make sure that you have clearly heard what he/she wishes to have you hear before responding. Showing respect by hearing someone out goes a long way to making both people feel they are on the same team.
12. Develop a **sense of humor** with people you care about, so that you can gently and warmly help each other see when one is falling back into old patterns. It takes all of us a while to learn new behaviors, and if our spouse is supportive rather than critical, we will learn much faster. In the team spirit, take this role on each other.
13. Find ways to **express love and affection to your partner** in a way in which they want to hear/see it. Do not assume that he/she should know without being told, and do not assume that your partner would like the same things that you would like him/her to do for you. Ask your partner what special things you could do to let him/her know how much you care, and do those things on a regular basis. Reciprocal caring, when both people are able to stand on their own two feet, yet freely show affection and love to the other is very healthy.
14. **Never call each other names, never swear** at each other, and never make false threats. In fact, in the heat of an argument it is crucial to never make any threats, because you are not thinking logically.
15. All couples, friends & colleagues have disagreements. Develop a **format for conflict resolution** by which issues can be resolved in your relationship, and a way to approach each other so that there is not a stand-off, both waiting for the other to make the first move.
16. Find a way to **learn something from each conflict** or issue which arises, so that your relationship can grow from even the bad times, and thus you will not have to repeat those times.