

How to Really Communicate

If you want to talk so that your friends, children, —and spouses will listen, here's what the experts suggest:

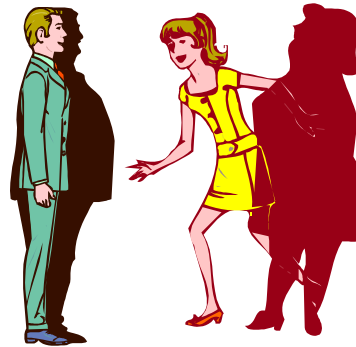
- **Say what you mean.** If you want to go out for dinner, say so. Don't turn it inside out so that you ask, "Do you want to go for dinner?"
- **Don't assume anything.** Family members don't know what you want unless you tell them. It's a myth to think that "if my spouse really loved me, she (or he) would know what I want." It's difficult to ask directly for what you want, but it's the best chance you have of getting it! Don't rely on mind-reading.
- **Make sure others are listening.** If you tell your children to do something while they're engrossed in a phone call, don't be surprised if they don't follow through. Make sure you have their attention. With younger children, especially, you may have to touch them on the arm to make sure you have their attention. Make eye-to-eye contact. Have them repeat your instructions to make sure they understand. Don't try to have a heart-to-heart with your spouse while the TV is on.
- **Understand the content as well as the process in your conversation.** The content is what you're saying—the actual words. The process is the way you're saying it—your tone of voice, what's going on around you as you speak.

Surprisingly listening doesn't come naturally to most people. It's a skill that has to be learned—and practiced. Here are some techniques that help.

1. **Clarify:** Make sure you understand what you're being told. If you don't —speak up.
2. **Acknowledge:** Smile, nod, let the person speaking know you're tuned in.
3. **Restate:** Put things in your own words. "It seems that what you're saying is..."
4. **Reflect:** "It sounds like you are upset..." This is really a great technique because it gets you off the hook for having to solve other people's problems. Parent, especially, think they have to solve all the problems that their children bring them. Sometimes the best thing they can do is to reflect a child's feelings with a few simple non-judgmental words: "That must have really hurt your feelings..." This encourages the child to talk more about the problem and perhaps come up with ideas for resolving it.
5. **Don't be defensive:** Hear the other person out, and don't assume he or she is being critical. If you do, you'll begin to concentrate on your own feelings rather than those of the speaker.

"30 pounds in 30 Days"

and other dangerous diet myths



If it seems too good to be true, it probably is—particularly when it comes to diets. The diet industry is a multi-billion dollar monster that is consuming the "always looking to be thinner" American Public.

Advertisements for diets often promise us we have finally found the road to ultimate "thinness," although these deceptive advertisements are taking many of us down the highway of misinformation, broken promises and delusion.

Dieting claims and promises abound, from miracle drinks, to secret powders that are said to boost your metabolism, and to diets that allow you to eat fat without limits and only small amounts of carbohydrates. Some others can actually harm your health. Here are a few "red flags" to help you spot diets that will probably do you more harm than good:

- diets offering a "quick fix" and fast weight loss.
- diets that require severely limited calories. Most of us need 1500 to 1800 calories a day to give us healthy energy for normal activities, and more calories if you are physically active. "Starving" yourself will get you nowhere in the long run.
- diets that imply simple conclusions drawn from a complex study.
- diets that give you lists of "good" and "bad" foods.
- diets that make recommendations based on a single study.
- diets that make recommendations made to help sell a product such as prepackaged foods or supplements.

An effective and healthy fat burning program (call it a "diet" if you wish) must have four crucial components: 1) Aerobic exercise; 2) A nutritious diet; 3) Weight training exercise; and 4) Goal setting and motivation. Diets that don't include these elements are probably fads and are best thrown out with your "hot pants" and "Go-go boots."

—WELLSPRING, FALL 2002



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

Winning Strategies for Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions

Just as it's traditional to make New Year's resolutions, it's (unfortunately) also traditional to break them. Typically, even the most well-intentioned, firmly resolved commitments to change come apart at the seams before January's end. One of the primary reasons people fail to follow through is that they take on the challenge of making big changes all on their own. 2004 could be the year you're finally successful at reaching your goals—if your #1 resolution is to identify and then get whatever help is needed to keep all of your other resolutions!

Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions!

At the beginning of each new year, millions of us commit to resolving personal problems, improving important relationships and/or strengthening our character by making a list of New Year's resolutions. The inclination to make New Year's resolutions dates back more than 4,000 years to the Babylonians (whose most popular resolution, it seems, was to return borrowed farm equipment!). Perhaps you, too, are resolving to return farm equipment this year, however, chances are, many, if not all, of your personal New Year's resolutions for 2004 can be found somewhere on this list of American's "Top Ten New Year's Resolutions:"

1. Lose Weight
2. Get in Better Shape
3. Quit Smoking
4. Become More Financially Secure
5. Do Something To Improve Some Else's Life
6. Simplify My Own Life
7. Do Something To Take Better Care of My Community, the Environment, and/or Human Rights Issues
8. Improve Intimate and/or Other Close Relationship(s)
9. Volunteer
10. Travel

Just as it's traditional to make resolutions, it's (unfortunately) also traditional to fail to keep them—typically, even the most well-intentioned, firmly resolved commitments to change come apart at the seams by early February. The behaviors, feelings, and thoughts we most want to change have most likely become automatic and, whether we like it or not, have firmly shaped how we've become accustomed to being.

Although it's frustrating, to say the least, to have to admit to yourself that you've broken your resolution and reverted back to your old, well-worn habits, it's important not to give up. Instead, accept setbacks for what they are—temporary lapses—and remember that persistence is key to eventual success.

Getting Started

1. Write your resolutions down and place the list in a prominent place, for example, written on the first page of a new journal, taped to your mirror or computer monitor, or affixed to the door of your refrigerator.
2. *Get the help you need!* Call and set up appointments with needed sources of support, for instance, a therapist, doctor, personal trainer, teacher, mentor, friend or accountant.
3. Mark your calendar with "benchmark deadlines" indicating all the step-by-step deadlines you can project that lead towards reaching your goal.
4. Start making the desired change(s) as soon as possible.
5. If possible, find a role model. Is there someone you know of who's succeeded at accomplishing what you're setting out to do? You can look to this person as a reminder that it's possible to achieve your goal.
6. Check your progress on a regular basis and give yourself periodic "rewards" for your ongoing efforts. (Make sure the reward is consistent with your resolution—for example, you wouldn't want to celebrate losing 5 pounds by eating a quart of Haagen-Dazs ice cream!)
7. Let your family and friends know about your new year's resolutions and welcome their regular reminders and support of your endeavors.

Secure a "Support Team"

If your goal is to get in shape, get a trainer and/or join a gym and/or form a group of friends who also want to adopt a healthier regime and work out together. If your goal is to stop smoking, check with your doctor to see what methods are right for you and ask your friends and family to help support and reinforce your positive efforts.

It could be that a therapist is the most important person to have as a member of your "support team." Change—no matter how much you want it—can be very hard, and there are usually underlying, unresolved issues beneath your old habits and patterns of thinking. Therapists are skilled at helping people assess their current situations, maintain motivation, and accomplish key life-changes.

Human Behavior Associates, Inc.

HBA is the provider of your Employee Assistance Program. Employees and their family members can call **1-800-937-7770** 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to request assistance with personal or family problems.