Communication 101: The Pull and Push of Constructive Communication

Supportiveness Skills: The “Pull”

I. Paraphrasing: Re-stating in one’s own words what another person has said.

   How to paraphrase

   A. Keep the focus on the one you’re paraphrasing. “So you felt....” “You’re saying....” “You believe....”
   B. Re-state in your own words, rather than simply parroting the speaker.
   C. Be brief, much it briefer than the speaker.
   D. Paraphrase content, feeling, or both.
   E. Match to some extent the emotional intensity of the speaker in your paraphrase.

Adantages of Paraphrasing

• Shows that you are understanding or at least are trying.
• Helps speaker to clarify thinking.
• Affirms worth of speaker.
• Helps you buy time if not ready to respond.
• Slows down a fast or angry conversation, helping to reduce the intensity of the conflict.

Examples

• “So you were really nervous when....”
• “You felt I was being unfair to you when....”
• “Let me make sure I’m understanding you. You’re saying....“

II. Openness: Communicating openness to hearing the perceptions and needs of others, even if those may be critical or competitive.

Examples

• “Say more about....”
• “Spell that out further.”
• “Tell me what you have in mind.”
• “Give me a specific example.”

III. Agreement Stating: Acknowledging where one agrees with others in the midst of a disagreement.

Examples

• “I agree with you that....”
• “I can see what you’re saying about....”
• “I share your concerns about....”
Assertiveness Skills: The “Push”

I. I-Messages: Confronting by talking about oneself rather than the other person, focusing especially on the impact of the situation on one’s emotions or performance. “I feel (emotion) when you (problem behavior) because (impact on me).”

Examples

• “I felt angry when you told me to meet you at noon and then you didn’t come or call, because I had changed my plans so we could meet.”
• “It’s very upsetting for me when you get your projects in late. I get behind with my deadlines and then everyone else gets on my case.”

II. Preference Statements: Communicating clearly one’s preferences or desires rather than stating them as demands or forcing others to guess.

Examples

• “My preference is….”
• “If it were just me….”
• “What I’d like is….”
• “It would be helpful to me if….”

III. Purpose Stating: Making known one’s intentions so others do not unknowingly operate at cross-purposes. By supplying information about your aims, a purpose statement enables others to understand what you are about and if possible, help achieve your purpose without needless misunderstanding.

Examples

• “What I’m trying to accomplish is….”
• “I’m hoping to….”
• “I was going to….”
• “I’m in the process of….”
• “My intention was to….”