



Mental Health Association of Northern Kentucky

A LEADER IN PROVIDING ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, AND SERVICES THAT PROMOTE MENTAL WELLNESS

EDUCATION AND SCREENING OUTREACH PARTNER FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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TEN COMMANDMENTS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

by Jean A. Baugh

1. **TRY TO REVEAL - NOT TO CONCEAL - YOURSELF.**
Make your words agree with your feelings and non-verbal signals. Translate your thoughts and feelings into appropriate actions.
2. **ENCOURAGE YOUR PARTNER TO SHARE HIS / HER THOUGHTS & FEELINGS.**
Listen attentively and responsively. Show acceptance of his / her feelings. Seek information to help you understand him / her by asking leading questions.
3. **BUILD SELF-ESTEEM IN YOURSELF AND IN YOUR PARTNER.**
You are both important and can work things out. High self-esteem doesn't 'happen' - choose to value yourself and your partner and act on it. Never use a 'put-down' on yourself or your partner. Put-downs are insulting, they destroy intimacy and create barriers.
4. **SPEAK FOR YOURSELF.**
Assume responsibility for your own growth, thoughts, actions, etc. Don't assume you know another's thoughts or feelings.
5. **SEND STRAIGHT MESSAGES.**
Look closely at how you think, feel, want and intend to act. Express it as clearly and directly as possible. When you have mixed feelings, say so. Do not send mixed messages (i.e. "you're a cute jerk"). They may confuse and hurt.
6. **RECOGNIZE FEELINGS AS VALID AND IMPORTANT.**
Listen for feelings and respond to them. "I hear a lot of hurt in what you said". Work through negative feelings until understanding is achieved.
7. **BE CONSTRUCTIVE - NOT DESTRUCTIVE.**
"Right now I'm furious with you because" "I hate your guts" only seals the conflict.
8. **AVOID BAD HABITS.**
Over-generalizations, using "never" or "always". Not checking out possible misunderstandings, if you're not sure about something, ask. Depreciating your partner by interrupting, violating a confidence, changing the subject, cutting him / her off or not listening - not hearing the feelings behind words.
9. **USE "I" MESSAGES TO EXPRESS YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS**
"You" messages accuse or blame. "I" messages only furnish information. "I feel _____ when you _____ because _____."
10. **USE PARAPHRASING TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING.**
Summarize what your partner said before you respond, it checks accuracy and conveys interest. It also keeps communication open and moving in a positive way.

