

# Your BEST Communication Skills

Using your BEST communication skills means using assertive body language, eye contact, speech, and tone of voice. This handout will help you remember these skills. The more you practice them, the easier it will get to use them.

---

**B** **Body language.** *Body language* is what you say through your posture and movements. For example, leaning toward someone can be interpreted as aggressive or interested, depending on the circumstances. Slouching can communicate passivity, shyness, discomfort, or disinterest. Assertiveness can be communicated by standing or sitting up straight, facing the person you're talking to, and not getting too close to the other person while you're speaking.

---

**E** **Eye contact.** *Eye contact* refers not only to *whether* you are looking at the other person in a conversation, but also to *how* you do so. Is it with intensity, or fleeting? Are you rolling your eyes, or gazing steadily and calmly? Facial expression is related to eye contact. Frowning, grimacing, or making other expressions that might convey anger, sarcasm, or disinterest can send negative messages. In general, direct eye contact and a neutral facial expression communicate assertiveness, although this can vary in some cultures.

---

**S** **Speech.** *Speech* is what you actually say—the verbal content of your communication. When you communicate assertively, you say what you mean in a direct, clear, and calm way. It's also important to avoid saying things that are likely to set off other people or make a situation worse (which can happen easily in trigger situations). You are less likely to say something you regret when you can control your strong emotions and your stress through breathing and positive self-talk. It can also help to practice things you might say in different situations.

---

**T** **Tone of voice.** Your *tone of voice* is how you sound as you speak, and it conveys a lot about how you are feeling. It's not what you say, but how you say it. Is the tone calm, whiney, sarcastic, loud, or hesitant? An assertive tone of voice is moderate, confident, and sincere.