

How To Communicate

By Christine Wixtrom

1. ESTABLISH POSITIVE COMMUNICATION GOALS:

- I want to “hear” and “see” you—to UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SAY.
- I want to SHARE MYSELF—my ideas and feelings—WITH YOU.
- I want to GIVE AND RECEIVE CLEAR MESSAGES.
- I want to ENJOY TALKING WITH YOU AS A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL.

2. RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO USE YOUR STYLE OF “COMMUNICATION” AS A SHIELD, A SWORD OR A BANNER:

- Don’t talk without taking time to listen.
- Don’t use “communication” to dominate and manipulate others, forcing them to use the method of communication, language, grammar or vocabulary choices that you prefer.
- Don’t try to promote your preferred method of communication as the One True Way. (Instead, do demonstrate flexibility and tolerance by allowing each person to express and receive communication as he or she prefers.)

3. SHOW CREATIVITY:

- If your first attempt to communicate fails, try another way!

Materials Required for Successful Sign Language Communication

1. WILLING HANDS

You can do it! The main requirement is willingness, not manual dexterity, perfect hands or talent.

People who face all kinds of barriers have learned to sign, including those with arthritis, cerebral palsy, missing fingers, big or small hands. Just remember that it may take some time for you to learn to feel comfortable using hands, face and body to talk.

2. AN EYE FOR UNDERSTANDING

If you demonstrate a positive attitude, you will have success. An attitude of respectful interest is far more important than fluency.

Most of us are not used to depending on our eyes to capture fleeting information. But “reading” sign language is a skill, like any other, that can be practiced and learned. Rather than striving to see every sign, relax and just try to get a general idea of what is being said. Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification.

3. AN OPEN MIND

Most importantly, keep an open mind about communication strategies. There are many ways to communicate. It doesn’t much matter **how** communication happens. Do whatever you can to help “make it happen”!