

# Communicating & Reconnecting



## Why communication matters?



We often think of ourselves of living in our houses or homes however, the reality is we live in relationships and communication is what connects us from one person to another. Think about a time recently when you engaged in a conversation with someone and you were left feeling understood by the other person. What was it about that communication which left you feeling that way?

Our earlier experiences are crucial to teaching us how we see, feel and attribute meaning and how we have a dialogue both with ourselves, our partners and others. Building self-awareness helps develop healthier communication and deeper connections with our partner.

### 4 Communication Styles

#### Passive

Compliant  
Submissive  
Talks little  
Vague & non-committal  
Puts self-down  
Apologises often  
Praises others  
Avoids eye contact

#### Aggressive

Harsh  
Always right  
Superior  
Know it all  
Interrupts? Talks over others  
Critical & puts others down

#### Passive-Aggressive

Mutter to themselves rather than confront  
Difficulty acknowledging anger  
Facial expression that does not match what message conveying  
Sarcasm

#### Assertive

Actions & expressions fit with words spoken  
Firm but polite  
Clear messages  
Respectful of self & others  
Warm & welcoming  
Open hand gestures  
Relaxed

Combat Stress.: Session 3



## Blocks in communication military partners describe;

These are some of the blocks military partners commonly report;

- Lack of emotion
- Lack of understanding of my emotional needs.
- Dissociation
- Avoiding conversation altogether

## The reciprocal nature of relationships

The reciprocal nature of giving and receiving is a characteristic in all highly successful relationships. When we trust in the act of giving and communicating in healthier or more assertive ways and not the result of it, this is when relationships truly flourish.



## Can the way I communicate influence the way another person communicates with me?

Given the challenges military partners experience in communicating with their partners, it might appear like there is nothing you can do to change the way you relate to each other. I am here to tell you, yes there is. Of course, it is not going to be easy & at first it may feel like you are acting but eventually you will notice a change.



## Our role

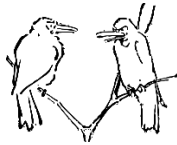
Our adult relationships do not begin when two people meet, it starts in the child of each partner (Armstrong, 2002). This learning gives us rules for how we communicate and relate to others in our adult lives. We might describe this to be like a hidden rule book which we are always carrying around with us. If we start taking a closer look at our own rule book, we might be able to notice patterns of how we communicate now based on our past relationships. These can often be subtle.

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## Where to begin?

*When there is a breakdown in communication in our relationships, we are inclined to identify what the other person is doing wrong & what they should be doing differently. The truth is, thinking or trying to change the other person's communication style is doomed for failure. The only change we can really make is in our own attitude & behaviour. Here are some ideas you might like to try out.*



### I hear you

Receiver shares with the sender how he/she imagines the other person is feeling. This technique really helps us to understand & empathise with the other person.



### I see you

Active listening involves listening with all senses. Interest in what another person is saying can be conveyed by nodding your head & smiling or by agreeing by saying yes or simply saying 'hmm hmm'. By using these fillers, it does not mean you are agreeing with everything the person has said but shows you are paying interest to what they are saying & validating the other person.



### Are you here with me?

By using shorter sentences of max 10 words, this can help keep your partner engaged. One way of thinking about this is making headlines instead of the small print.



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## Did what I say make sense to you?

Paraphrase what the person has said to you. The next time your partner makes a point, take a moment to digest what they are saying then say it back to them, in a way which shows you got the gist. Switch roles of being the receiver & sender & practice.

This technique might sound really simple, but it can be really helpful in sending the message; I am listening to you & what you have to say is important to me'.



## Expressing your feelings assertively

Use the 'I' script 4 steps as a way of expressing your feelings

1. When \_\_\_\_\_ describe event
2. I feel \_\_\_\_\_ describe emotion
3. I'd prefer it if \_\_\_\_\_ suggest solutions or way forward
4. What do you think/What are your thoughts?



## Developing Intimacy

Find out what is it we are not talking about here? If your partner does decide to talk to you about their traumas, respond with empathy and non-judgment. Do not respond by saying you feel sad. Thank them for sharing with you and help them to feel validated.

Find out what both of you really want. Set some shared goals.



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## Ways to build Intimacy



### 1. Identifying your love language

Relationship expert Gary Chapman has spent years looking at what makes relationships work.

He found human beings across all continents, all races and cultures have 5 basic ways of communicating with each other in relationships. He calls this the 5 love languages;

1. Words of affirmation
2. Physical touch
3. Acts of service
4. Quality time
5. Gifts

He proposes we all have a primary preference for one of these languages.

To find out another's love language, we must observe the way they express love to others and work out what they complain about most and what they ask from their significant other most often. He suggests people tend to naturally give love in the way that they prefer to receive love.



### 2. Find out what is it we are not talking about here?

Find out what is it we are not talking about here? One of the obstacles for talking about difficult topics or feelings is not knowing how to. Using alternatives to talking about feelings like emojis or magnets on the fridge can help improve our vocabulary of feelings and expose us too.

If your partner does decide to talk to you about their traumas, respond with empathy and non-judgment. Try to not respond by saying you feel sad. Thank them for sharing with you and help them to feel validated.



### 3. Gratitude Exercise

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Gratitude makes relationships flourish. As you increase your gratitude for any relationship, you will magically receive an abundance of happiness and good things in that relationship.

Choose a photograph of your partner. Sit down and think about the things you are the most grateful for about your partner. What are the things you love the most about this person? What are their best qualities? You could be grateful for their patience, ability to listen, talents, strength, good judgement, wisdom, laugh, sense of humor, eyes, smile, or kind heart. You could be grateful for the things you enjoy doing with the person, or you can recall a time when the person was there for you.

After you've spent some time thinking about what you're grateful for about the person, put their photograph in front of you, and with a pen or a notebook, choose the five things you are the most grateful for. Look at the photograph of the person as you make your list of five things, begin each sentence with the magic words, *thank you*, address the person by their name, and then write what you're grateful for. *Thank you, their name, for what*. For example, "Thank you, John, for always making me laugh."

Adapted from *The Magic*, Rhonda Byrne



### 4. Creating a vision for the future together

Think about your partner and your own dreams, your goals for the future, the big ones and the small ones. What do you really want? What experiences do you want to have together? Select photos and positive affirmations to put on a vision board. Having this will consistently remind you of your goals and increase your sense of hope and motivation to take action towards achieving these.