

# Effective Communication

*Listening is an essential part of good communication.*

*Communication is an integral part of being human.*

*Good communication is the critical first step in any relationship.*

## Checklist for Communication Skills

- Identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- What are your barriers to good listening?
- Track progress on yourself—make an inventory of listening habits.
- Can you/do you repeat back your understanding of what was said for confirmation or clarification?
- Do you ask questions to aid in your understanding?

Good communication starts with good intentions. It proceeds with empathy, rapport, and cultural sensitivity. It ends with the conveyance of more than just information; it is a matrix of information and relationship cues that all humans need to place themselves within the context of society.

In the setting of a university, as it often is in business, effective communication is a key component of success. Learning how to communicate effectively with others involves an intentional deciphering of the shorthand encoded both by cultures and by the human condition. Examples of the elements of this shorthand are body language and facial cues.

It is important to note that in our ever-increasingly technological society that nonverbal communications have come to dominate the expected forms of communication. Text messages and IMs come to the forefront of communications preferences with college-age students, whereas older people are more comfortable with e-mail or phone messages. Finding out about the preferred contact method(s) of your mentee is as important as establishing your own boundaries related to the subject.

## Questions to Think About

- How do you prefer to be contacted?
- Are there specific times when it is or is not acceptable to call?
- How do you feel about receiving or sending text messages?
- How often do you **consistently** check your e-mail? What is a timely response to an e-mail?

Solid, effective communication provides a basis for developing a strong relationship. Strong relationships are based on trust. Trust is a currency that is often traded, but can never be purchased or restored to perfect condition in the event that it is broken. Trust is related to integrity and is an outgrowth of it. People with integrity are the same people who can clearly communicate, listen well, and become the people whom others most admire.

Good listening, empathy, trust, and good communication are all skills that are learned and improved upon over time. In order to be your best, all you have to do is practice.