

Communicating for Understanding Skills

These Communicating for Understanding Skills follow five steps so that each person in the conversation understands what the other person is saying—whether they agree or not.

- Step 1:** Initiate
- Step 2:** Mirror
- Step 3:** Summarize
- Step 4:** Validate
- Step 5:** Empathize

Concept

Validate means showing you value the other person's opinions even if you don't agree.

Empathize means understanding and being sensitive to the other person's feelings, thoughts, and experience.

Each step uses its own kind of sentence stems, examples of which are in teal below.



1. Initiate

The sender asks for some time to talk.

Sender:

"Can we talk?
I'd like to speak with you about...
Do you have a minute?"



2. Mirror

The receiver checks for understanding about what the sender has said and means. This step should continue until the receiver understands the sender's message.

Receiver:

"What I'm hearing you say is...
Is there anything more you'd like me to know?
Tell me more..."



3. Summarize

The receiver summarizes the key parts of what the sender has said.

Receiver:

"So, let me see if I've got it all."



4. Validate

The receiver shows understanding and valuing of the sender's point of view even if they don't agree.

Receiver:

"I understand...
I can see it's important to you..."



5. Empathize

The receiver expresses care and sensitivity to the sender's feelings, thoughts, or experience.

Receiver:

"I imagine you feel..."

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