

Communicating effectively

It is often said that the lifeblood of any relationship is communication. Keep in mind that we communicate not only by what we say, but also by

- the way we say things,
- when and where we say them, and
- a variety of non-verbal methods (e.g., eye contact, body language, spending time with someone, a hug).

Here are some tips to improve communication:

- If you've something important to discuss with someone, find a time that's good for both of you, and allow long enough for both of you to talk and listen.
- The “ ‘I’ ‘we’ ‘you’ ” of communication: Use ‘I feel’ statements (for example, 'I feel disappointed that we couldn't meet up last week') rather than blaming statements (for example, 'You made me so angry when . . . '). Stop reacting, and learn to resolve conflict and compromise from a “we” perspective.
- If you want to give feedback to someone on their behaviour, keep it clear, brief and specific. Remember it's OK to give positive feedback (for example, 'I'd really like to thank you for . . . '), as well as saying how you'd like things to be different (for example, 'I'd really appreciate it if you could . . . ').
- If you have given someone some feedback, check how they feel and what they think of what you have said. For example, you could say afterwards: 'Does that make sense to you?' or 'Do you see what I mean?'
- Try to avoid getting stuck in the trap of thinking there is a right or 'true' way of doing something. Value the differences in others and seek a compromise if appropriate. For example, 'I can see we feel very differently about this. Is there some way we could meet halfway?'
- Accept critical remarks as a way for you to learn more about a relationship. Deal with them by finding some part of the criticism to agree with and invite the person to tell you more. This will enable you to evaluate the criticism effectively and respond in a non-defensive, self-accepting way. For example, 'You're right, my [OCD] has made life more difficult for you. I've often worried about the effect it has had on you. What particularly would you like to be different?'

Taken from 'Overcoming OCD' by David Veale and Rob Wilson