

How to successfully communicate with people who are different

> How to facilitate communication between people who are different

Communication between people who are different (e.g. personalities, generations, cultures, languages, etc.) can be facilitated if they are trying to connect with each other. As a result, this connection reduces the prejudices that might exist between them.

> What do we mean by a connection?

One of the best ways to improve the relationship between people who are different is by creating a connection between them under certain favourable conditions.



> What are the favourable conditions that can facilitate people who are different creating a connection at work?



FIRST CONDITION HAVING SHARED GOALS

Employees have to feel that they have a shared goal, and that they need to work together to achieve it. A connection that leads employees to accomplish things together is likely to bring about a change in their attitude towards each other.

Example: Create a situation where people will need the knowledge or know-how of their colleagues (e.g., language skills, familiarity with the city, with music in a specific language, or from another era).



SECOND CONDITION HAVING THE SENSE THAT THEY'RE ON THE SAME FOOTING

Employees cannot feel "inferior" to people who are different than them.

Example: During discussions, employees have to feel that people who are different are on the same footing, or that their opinion is valued.



THIRD CONDITION GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COLLEAGUES

Take the time to create an emotional bond with your colleagues, in order to get rid of any baseless perceptions, and to reduce negative emotions.

Example: There needs to be an opportunity to get to know "others" better on a personal level: who they are, what they like, where they come from – set aside time for a personal exchange that isn't based on work.



FOURTH CONDITION CHANGING YOUR BEHAVIOUR

Re-evaluate the way you think about colleagues who are different in order to open yourself up to potential positive connections.

Example: It's no longer a "Francophone", or an "Anglophone", or a "Hispanophone", it's Mélissa, Joey, Luis, etc. You have to make it a habit of seeing « the person » who is in front of you, and not only a certain group to which they belong.

> Why does this connection reduce prejudices, and promote communication between people who are different?

- Reduces anxiety
- Increases empathy, and helps employees see things from the other person's point of view.
- Allows you to see a colleague who is different as an individual (e.g. differences based on culture, generation, personality, or age), rather than only a member of a certain group.
- Encourages establishing a friendship between the different people.

> Why is a positive interaction with colleagues important at work?

- **Increase in workplace satisfaction:** If employees are encouraged to share their ideas with their colleagues, and their comments are taken into consideration, this motivates employees to work better, and gives them a feeling of being appreciated by their colleagues.
- **Reduction of work conflicts:** Open communication at work can help prevent, and resolve a number of conflicts. These conflicts can be easily resolved by open, and clear communication, which can lead to personal, and professional growth.
- **Establishment of good working relationships:** Effective communication ensures a workplace environment that supports better relationships between employees.

Some characteristics of a diversified workplace

A workplace where:

- Values clearly express the need to show dignity and respect;
- Different cultural norms, and their impact on communication, and resolving problems, and conflicts are understood;
- Different points of view are listened to, and respected;
- Knowledge transfer (e.g., having a colleague with a different culture, age, or personality who can suggest a new way of working, which allows employees to expand their knowledge and skills) is welcomed.

> Why should you use non-violent communication at work?

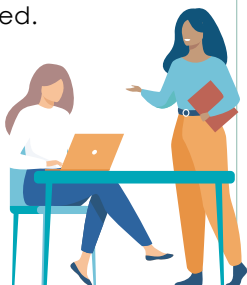
It's a technique that can be used to express yourself when you want to facilitate communication, and openness toward the other person. It is also a good technique for listening to the other person, and for being heard with respect, and authenticity.

THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION:

Observing:	Describe the situation without judgement, in order to create an openness in the other person.
Expressing feelings:	Express your feelings, and your attitudes that are brought up by this situation, using an "I" statement.
Expressing needs:	Identify, and express your needs (an unsatisfied need = a disagreeable feeling).
Formulating a request:	Make a request, following these criteria: attainable, concrete, precise, and formulated in a positive way.

TIP FOR EXPRESSING YOURSELF TO SOMEONE WITH A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY

During a meeting, X feels that Y is taking up a lot of space to express themselves, and that they are preventing their colleagues from giving their opinion by talking at the same time as the others, and expressing their opinion loudly (i.e., divergent personalities). X feels uncomfortable, and irritated.



Here's how X could resolve this bothersome situation at work using non-violent communication:

- Observing:** "In the meeting earlier, you started to talk several times when someone was in the middle of expressing their point of view."
- Expressing feelings, and needs:** "I'm a little worried that some people didn't have a chance to express themselves. I think that it's important that everybody in the group is considered, and has their chance to be heard. I also think that it's important to hear a variety of opinions from people in the group."
- Formulating a request:**

FOR CONNECTION: "How do you feel about what I just expressed?"

FOR ACTION: "So, for tomorrow's meeting, I was wondering if we could do an exercise where each person in the group has five minutes to express themselves, while the others listen quietly. What do you think of that idea?"

TIP FOR HANDLING DIFFERENT OPINIONS WITHOUT UPSETTING YOUR COLLEAGUE

You're in the cafeteria, in the middle of your lunch, and you're discussing the news with your colleague. You're uncomfortable, because you don't have the same opinion as them on the subject. You know that the disagreement is due to your different personalities. You are looking for a way to express your different opinions without upsetting them.

Here's how you could resolve this situation with the four stages of non-violent communication:

- Observing:** "I don't think we see things in the same way, but it's important to talk about it."
- Expressing feelings, and needs:** "In my personal experience, I see things this way (express your opinion)."
- Formulating a request:**

FOR CONNECTION: if the discussion is friendly, and you want to continue discussing things with your colleague, you could mention the following: "Even though we see things differently, I think your opinion is important. Do you want to continue discussing things?"

FOR ACTION: if the discussion is more difficult, you could mention the following: "Even though we disagree, I think your opinion is important. I think we've covered about everything. How would you feel about talking about something else?"

TIP FOR BETTER HANDLING A COLLEAGUE FROM A DIFFERENT GENERATION

X is 25 years old, and just started working after getting their degree. They share the better ways of doing things that they learned at school with their supervisor Y. Y, having worked in the field for over 20 years, feels irritated by the way X communicates their ideas, because they feel that they are constantly trying to correct them.



Here's how you could resolve this situation with the four stages of non-violent communication:

1. **Observing:** "You have a lot of good ideas for how to improve our way of doing things, and it's important that we talk about them."
2. **Expressing feelings, and needs:** "But, I think we have to find a time when we're both available to discuss them."
3. **Formulating a request:**
FOR CONNECTION: "That way, it'll be easier for me to listen to your ideas, and to share my thoughts on them. What do you think about that?"
FOR ACTION: "What do you think about finding a time when we're both available to discuss them. We could meet on this date (and set up a meeting)."

TIP FOR BETTER EXPRESSING YOURSELF, AND MAKING YOURSELF HEARD AT WORK WITH A PERSON WHO SPEAKS A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE

Two colleagues are discussing a challenge that they're facing at work. Because French is X's third language, they have a hard time expressing themselves, and making themselves understood by their colleague Y. On their side, Y doesn't speak English. The language barrier prevents these two colleagues from communicating effectively.



Here's how you could resolve this situation with the four stages of non-violent communication:

1. **Observing:** "Can I stop you for a minute? I think we're having a hard time understanding each other properly."
2. **Expressing feelings, and needs:** "I feel like I'm losing my patience. I need us to take a break."
3. **Formulating a request:**
FOR CONNECTION: "That way, it'll be easier for me to concentrate after that. What do you think?"
FOR ACTION: "What do you think about trying to write down what you want to explain to me?" or "What do you think about getting help from a colleague/supervisor who can help us better understand each other?"

IN OTHER WORDS: IT'S BETTER TO ACCEPT DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO BETTER WORK TOGETHER

- **Having a diversified workplace makes it stronger:**
 - it allows you to have more opinions on a given topic,
 - allows you to delegate tasks according to the fields in which your colleagues are more successful;
- **In the end, despite these differences, every individual agrees on these two main points:**
 - These are all human beings who want to be respected
 - These are all human beings who want to be recognized for who they are

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