

WELLNESS KEY 4 TOOLS

How to Build Better Communication

Open and honest dialogue with those in your life can help you address needs, solve problems, feel supported and maintain healthy relationships throughout the ups and downs of Parkinson's disease (PD). Below are tips for improving communication skills and getting your message across.

Be mindful of PD communication challenges. Parkinson's can impact communication. People may take longer to share thoughts, and speech may be softer or less clear. Be patient and allow extra time for responses. Facial expressions may not always match spoken words. During "off" periods, communication can be more difficult, so it helps to talk when medications are working well. To learn more, visit [Parkinson.org/Speech](https://www.parkinson.org/Speech).

Consider prior relationship dynamics. Past resentments or fears can impact healthy communication. Understanding these triggers can help address issues.

Build communication skills. Using "I feel ..." statements and active listening can help encourage empathy and understanding.

Practice regularly. Building new communication habits takes effort.

Get support. Adjusting long-standing communication patterns can be difficult. Counseling or therapy can offer valuable guidance, and support groups can connect you with others facing similar challenges.

Communication Strategies

Explore these effective communication strategies to improve your interactions:

"I feel ..." Statements

Starting difficult conversations with "I feel ..." allows you to express your feelings and needs without placing blame. For example, instead of saying "You don't listen or care about my feelings," try this:

Instructions:	Examples:
Use "I feel ..." statements.	I feel hurt ...
Describe the situation.	... when you don't respond to my questions.
Explain the impact.	I'm starting to feel disconnected.
State your need or request.	I would like you to acknowledge when I say something to you, even with a small nod.
Offer a solution or compromise.	I will try to be more patient if you can do your best to let me know you have heard me.



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How to Build Better Communication Continued

Active Listening

Active listening is a communication technique that helps build trust, improve understanding and strengthen relationships by making sure the speaker feels heard and appreciated.

Follow these steps:

5 Steps for Active Listening

1. Give your full attention

- Put away distractions (like phones or computers) and make eye contact.

2. Show you are listening

- Nod, use facial expressions or say short affirmations like: "I see" or "I understand."
- Avoid interrupting; let the person finish speaking.

3. Reflect back

- Answer based on what was shared.
- Ask clarifying questions if something is not clear.

4. Respond thoughtfully

- Rephrase to ensure you understand. For example, say, "So, what you're saying is ..."
- Confirm you have understood correctly by summarizing key points.

5. Show empathy

- Acknowledge the speaker's feelings.
- Use compassionate language: "That sounds really challenging" or "I get why you feel that way."

Putting it into Practice

Try using these new communication tools to help navigate challenging conversations.

Afterwards, reflect:

What communication strategies did I use? How did they work?

What did I learn from this experience that I can apply to future conversations?

Do I need support or guidance to improve my communication skills or navigate relationship dynamics?



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