

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy Positive Communication

In the previous sessions we have talked about the Notorious 5, and looked at the self-destructive manner in which we communicate with ourselves. Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, or Rational Self Counselling, teaches us that thoughts trigger feelings which in turn will trigger behaviour.

Language is a very powerful thing, whether it's when we're talking to ourselves, or dealing with the loved ones in our life, a good understanding of our own communication styles can help us appreciate why some things might not be going the way that we intend them to.

For those of us dealing with addiction in the family environment, communication can be a troublesome thing. We are desperately trying to control external events, while internally things are running wild. This creates troubled relationships and always stems from, or leads to, miscommunication.

Generally speaking, in these troubled relationships, both parties begin to favor negative comments, rather than positive comments. We begin to converse in terms of "you" statements rather than "I" statements and we tend to disregard each other's point of view.



Both parties stop sharing responsibility for the situation, begin to blame each other, and accountability is nonexistent. This becomes a habitual behaviour, and as we have learned about habitual behaviours, these ineffective communication styles can be changed.

Learning to communicate in a positive way, and learning to listen to your loved one in an effective way, are skills that can lead to an improved relationship and the possibility of collaboration vs. confrontation.

Generally speaking, communication can be characterized by four different styles. Which one do you most frequently use to deal with conflicts in your relationships?

Passive communication

- Not standing up for your rights
- Not setting limits or boundaries on another's behavior
- Continually putting other's needs before your own
- Taking on the role of "martyr"
- Not being able to say "no"

Aggressive Communication

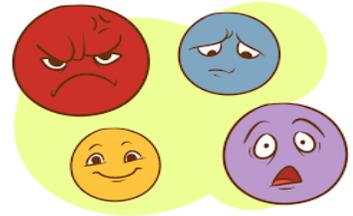
- Bullying and intimidating others to get what you want
- Threatening people
- Ignoring the needs and rights of others
- Shouting, yelling, screaming or physically abusing others

Passive-Aggressive Communication

- Indirectly communicating - e.g., slamming doors; giving the "silent treatment"; saying something that is designed for your loved one to hear without saying it to him or her directly
- Using sarcasm and put downs
- Using humor to be nasty or hurtful

Assertive Communication

- Being direct and honest
- Being able to negotiate - having a sense of give and take
- Asking for your own needs to be met, while respecting the needs of others
- Being able to say "no" and set limits
- Being able to acknowledge when you are in the wrong



Positive communication and active listening skills are integral to redeveloping troubled relationships. In the next session we will look at some tools to use in conversation that allow your loved one to feel supported while establishing boundaries in the relationship that keep you safe from personal burnout.