



The Tuesday Program

Communicating more effectively in your relationships

Your tasks are to:

1. Think about these questions:

- A. What “positive relationships” do you currently have and with whom?
- B. What do you need to do to care for these relationships on an ongoing basis?
- C. Who are the “positive energisers” in your life and how do they have that effect on you?
- D. Which relationships in your life do you need to consciously work on to improve?
- E. What small actions can improve your relationships?

2. Use the Active Constructive Responding technique wherever appropriate over the coming week. An active constructive response is essentially responding to other’s good news with enthusiasm, energy, and engagement.

There are four ways of responding, and Active Constructive Responding has been shown to build relationships best:

- An Active Constructive Response involves expressing enthusiastic positive support.
- An Active Destructive Response involves expressing a derogatory or critical response.
- A Passive Constructive Response involves showing benign disinterest.
- A Passive Destructive Response involves distancing or failing to respond.

Example: Suppose that your partner or very good friend gets a promotion at work. An Active Constructive Responding would be:

- Active Constructive Response = “That is really great. I am so proud of you. I know how important that promotion was to you. We should go out and celebrate”. The person is maintaining eye contact and displaying positive emotion, such as laughing or smiling.
- Active Destructive Response = “That sounds like a lot of responsibility to take on. There will probably be more stress involved in the new position and potentially longer hours at the office”. The person is displaying negative emotions, such as frowning.





- Passive Constructive Response = “That’s good news”. The person is displaying little nonverbal communication.
- Passive Destructive Response = “What are we doing Friday night? The person does not acknowledge the good news, is not in eye contact, and may be turning away or leaving the room.

Empirical studies suggest that using Active Constructive Responding is a good way to convey understanding, validation and caring, and to increase the well-being of your existing friends, as well as to make new friends and to encourage closer, more trusting relationships with them. Thus, your task is to carefully listen to people you care about and when they report good events to you, respond actively and constructively to the good events reported. What this technique highlights is that giving enthusiastic and attentive feedback is very important in building positive relationships.

More information on Communication:

Books

- Linehan, M. (1993). Skills training manual for treating borderline personality disorder. New York: Guilford Press.
- Carnegie, D. (2009). How to win friends and influence people. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Websites

- <http://work911.com/communication/indexskills.htm>

Research Articles

- Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E., & Asher, E. R. (2004). What do you do when things go right? The intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits of sharing positive events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 228-245.

