The Five Secrets of Effective Communication

Listening Skills

1. **The Disarming Technique** - You find some truth in what the other person is saying, even if you feel convinced that what they're saying is totally wrong, unreasonable, irrational, or unfair.

2. **Empathy** - You put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to see the world through his or her eyes.

   **Thought Empathy:** You paraphrase the other person's words.

   **Feeling Empathy:** You acknowledge how they're probably feeling, given what they are saying to you.

3. **Inquiry** - You ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.

Self Expression Skills

1. **“I feel” statements** - You express your feelings with "I feel" statements (such as "I feel Upset") rather than with "you" statements (such as "You're wrong!") or "You're making me furious!")

2. **Stroking** - You find something genuinely positive to say to the other person, even in the heat of battle. This indicates that you respect the other person, even though you may be angry with each other.

The Characteristics of Poor Communication

1. **Truth** - You insist that you are "right" and the other person is "wrong."

2. **Blame** - You say that the problem is the other person’s fault.

3. **Martyrdom** - You claim that you're an innocent victim.

4. **Put-Down** - You imply that the other person is a loser because he or she "always" or "never" does certain things.

5. **Hopelessness** - You give up and insist there's no point in trying.

6. **Demandingness** - You say you're entitled to better treatment but you refuse to ask for what you want in a direct, straightforward way.

7. **Denial** - You insist that you don't feel angry, hurt or sad when you really do.

8. **Passive Aggression** - You pout or withdraw or say nothing. You may sum out of the room or slam doors.

9. **Self-blame** - Instead of dealing with the problem, you act as if you're an awful, terrible person.

10. **Helping** - Instead of hearing how depressed, hurt or angry the other person feels, you try to "solve the problem" or "help" him or her.

11. **Sarcasm** - Your words or tone of voice convey tension or hostility, which you aren't openly acknowledging.

12. **Scapegoating** - You suggest that the other person has "a problem" and that you're sane, happy and uninvolved in the conflict.

13. **Defensiveness** - You refuse to admit any wrongdoing or imperfection.

14. **Counterattack** - Instead of acknowledging how the other person feels, you respond to their criticism by criticizing them.

15. **Diversion** - Instead of dealing with how you both feel in the here-and-now, you list grievances about past injustices.