Communicating Effectively

Wanting to help is a great thing, but how you help is important too! The way you approach and talk to people impacts to what degree they truly hear you. Here you will find some things to avoid as well as more techniques to help you have helpful conversations.

Barriers to Effective Communication:

- Name-calling/Put-downs
- Saying things because you know they will upset the person
- Bringing up other personal issues
- Diagnosing or analyzing
- Threatening
- Controlling
- Judging
- Excessive questioning
- Asking closed-ended questions
- Lecturing
- Diverting or ignoring the problem
- Arguing to convince
- Prying
- Disregarding their feeling
- Poor body language

Tools for Constructive Communication:

- Listen actively
  - Listen more than you talk.
  - Listen for ideas and meaning, not just the specific words they use.
  - Check for understanding and clarity. “What I hear you saying is ___. Is that what you meant?”
  - Do not think of what you want to say next while the other person is speaking.
- Be honest.
- Use “I” statements. “I feel ____ when ______”
  - Talk about your feelings/emotions without blaming or attacking.
  - Talk about your needs without demanding.
- Talk about your perspective and assumptions made. “Here’s what I think and this is how I got here”
- Acknowledge the other person’s feelings. “I see how you could feel that way.”
- Use good non-verbal communication by making eye contact and open body language.