

## Lesson E1–5

# Use Communication Skills Appropriately in the Workplace

**Unit E.** Effective Communication

**Problem Area 1.** Develop Communication Skills

**Lesson 5.** Use Communication Skills Appropriately in the Workplace

■ **Illinois State Goal and Learning Standards.** This lesson is correlated with the following State Goal and Learning Standards:

**State Goal 4:** Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

**Learning Standards A and B:** Listen effectively in formal and informal situations. Speak effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience.

**Performance Descriptors (A) I3, I4, I5:** Paraphrase and summarize, with appropriate editorial comments, information from formal, informal, and media presentations. Ask probing, idea-generating questions and make appropriate statements to clarify and add to meaning. Analyze and evaluate verbal and nonverbal cues.

**Performance Descriptors (B) I1, I4, I8:** Communicate effectively the intended message. Use language that is clear, audible, and appropriate. Demonstrate composure while confronting or rebutting opposing views.

**National Knowledge and Skills Communications Standard.** Health care workers will know the various methods of giving and obtaining information. They will communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. Performance Elements: use communication skills.

**Workplace Skills D1:** Communicate orally with others.

**Occupational Skill Standards:** (1) Dental Assistant (IL.02.HSS.DA.105); (2) Dental Hygienist (IL.02.HSS.DH.59); (3) Nursing (IL.03.HSS.NU.1); (4) Occupational Therapy Assistant (IL.01.HSS.OTC.20); (5) Physical Therapy Assistant (IL.99.HSS.PT.7); (6) Surgical Tech (IL.99.HSS.ST.6)



■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 **Describe the roles of effective communication in the workplace.**
- 2 **Apply effective communication techniques to present a problem to a supervisor.**
- 3 **Apply effective communication techniques when writing in a patient record.**
- 4 **Demonstrate telephone etiquette in the workplace.**

■ **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Badasch, S., and Chesebro, D. (2004). *Introduction to Health Occupations*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Gerdin, J. (2003). *Health Careers Today*, 3rd ed. St. Louis: Mosby.

Simmers, L. (2004). *Diversified Health Occupations*, 6th ed. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Learning.

Sorrentino, S. (2004). *Mosby's Textbook for Nursing Assistants*, 6th ed. St. Louis: Mosby.

■ **List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ **Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ aggressive communication
- ▶ assertive communication
- ▶ chain of command
- ▶ passive communication

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

Ask students to think about a situation in which they recognized that there was a miscommunication. This could be in their peer relationships, with their parents, or during their work hours if they are employed. Ask them to discuss the

consequences of the miscommunication. Introduce your own scenario from the health care workplace, where the stakes are much higher—perhaps a patient getting the wrong treatment, etc. Point out that health care workers must be effective in their communications, both written and oral. The lives of patients depend on it, and in some cases, the legal issues for the health care worker can be career ending.

## SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Describe the roles of effective communication in the workplace.

**Anticipated Problem:** What roles do communication skills play in the workplace?

- I. In health care, communication between workers is carried on in a professional and precise manner.
  - A. Communication is usually conveyed in a **chain of command**, or a line of authority or a hierarchy.
    1. Usually assistants would not report to a department head but to a team leader.
    2. The message is relayed as necessary through the chain of command.
    3. The chain of command structure is there to give immediate supervisory guidance as needed to assistant-level workers.
  - B. “People skills” are the important abilities that help people work together and get along.
    1. Effective people skills are sought by employers.
    2. Traits that demonstrate good people skills include being courteous, commending others for good jobs, seeking advice from others, criticizing carefully, and having empathy.
  - C. Assertive communication is the preferred mode of communicating in the workplace.
    1. **Assertive communication** is an honest and direct way for a person to say what he or she feels or thinks.
    2. Assertive communication allows a person to say no when it is appropriate, as when asked to do something for which he or she has not been trained to do.
    3. Assertive communication does not take power away from others. It empowers others to speak up and be heard.
  - D. Unassertive communication, or **passive communication**, allows others to control the conversation and potential outcome.

- E. **Aggressive communication** occurs when power is taken away from others and communication is broken down.
- F. Speech and language must be professional in the workplace. What is said at home or in informal situations may offend patients and co-workers.
  - 1. Do not use slang.
  - 2. Do not use foul, vulgar, or abusive language.
  - 3. Control voice volume and tone.
  - 4. Do not engage in arguing with co-workers, supervisors, families, or patients.

*Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could use Chapter 2 in *Health Careers Today* or Chapter 5 in *Introduction to Health Occupations*. Use VM–A and LS–A to reinforce concepts of effective communication.*

**Objective 2:** Apply effective communication techniques to present a problem to a supervisor.

**Anticipated Problem:** How should one present a problem to a supervisor?

- II. Oral communications with supervisors are a vital part of working as a health care team member.
  - A. Follow the chain of command for reporting problems.
  - B. Decide when and if a problem should be presented.
    - 1. Major problems require immediate attention, and minor ones can wait until one’s supervisor has plenty of time to listen.
    - 2. Determine what the goal of presenting a problem to a supervisor would/should be before actually doing so.
  - C. When talking or writing to a supervisor, one should do the following:
    - 1. Explain the problem clearly and unemotionally.
    - 2. State the facts in an objective manner, and offer opinions only if asked.
    - 3. Focus on a solution to the problem.

*Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could use VM–B for illustrations of objective, constructive comments versus subjective, emotional comments. The latter are not usually helpful.*

**Objective 3:** Apply effective communication techniques when writing in a patient record.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are the charting guidelines for a patient record?

- III. Written records allow for continuity of care. In addition, many written documents in the patient chart may be needed for legal reference in the future.
- A. Patient charting must be clear and legible.
  - B. Patient documents are admissible in a court of law.
  - C. Nothing written on a patient record assumes that ordered treatment was not done.
  - D. Follow these charting guidelines:
    - 1. Write neatly in ink. In some facilities, different ink colors are used for different shifts.
    - 2. If cursive handwriting is not legible, then print.
    - 3. If an error is made in charting, do not try to cover it up. Draw a single line through it, write “error” next to it, and sign initials next the correction made.
    - 4. Keep entries brief and meaningful. There is no need to write the patient’s name, since charting is occurring in that patient’s record.
    - 5. All entries must be signed by the person doing the charting, including first initial, last name, and title.
    - 6. Use only agency-approved abbreviations.
    - 7. Avoid misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and incorrect punctuation.
    - 8. Never chart a treatment or procedure until it is done.
  - E. In general, charting should include these areas:
    - 1. Care or treatment given
    - 2. Time of treatment
    - 3. How the patient tolerated the care or treatment
    - 4. Any observations that would be helpful to other health care workers
    - 5. Information that the patient has given you that would affect treatment

*Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could use Chapter 4 in Mosby’s Textbook for Nursing Assistants or Chapter 5 in Introduction to Health Occupations. Use VM–C to illustrate correct charting procedures.*

**Objective 4:** Demonstrate telephone etiquette in the workplace.

**Anticipated Problem:** What is proper telephone etiquette in the workplace?

- IV. Answering the telephone properly is a skill health care professionals need to learn.
- A. Health care professionals may have to handle complaints, screen calls, and obtain accurate medical information to pass on to another health care provider.
  - B. Follow these guidelines for answering the telephone:
    - 1. Answer promptly, on the first ring if possible.
    - 2. Provide name and place of business.
    - 3. Establish who is calling.
    - 4. Speak courteously.
    - 5. Keep pen, paper, clock, and calendar handy.
    - 6. Give full attention to the caller.
    - 7. Use discretion in giving out information.
    - 8. Explain any delays.
    - 9. Speak clearly in a normal tone.
    - 10. End the call politely after obtaining all necessary information from the caller.
  - C. Sometimes it may be necessary to screen calls, particularly if working in an office. Follow these suggestions if screening calls is necessary:
    - 1. Don't offend the caller.
    - 2. Ask who is calling, the nature of the call, and the degree of urgency.
    - 3. Answer questions tactfully.
    - 4. Ask if a message can be left.
  - D. Taking a message:
    - 1. Be sure to write down all important information—time, date, name of caller, and purpose of call.
    - 2. Make notes while the caller is speaking.
    - 3. Make sure writing is neat and legible.
    - 4. Use special message forms, if available.
    - 5. Do not hesitate to ask the caller to repeat information.
    - 6. Repeat information to the caller to verify correctness.
    - 7. Get a phone number where the caller can be reached.

*Many techniques can be used here to help students master this objective. As an example, the class could break into pairs and role-play. One partner in each pair could portray a person making a phone call and wanting to leave a message for his or her physician regarding an ailment, and the other partner could portray the person receiving the phone call and needing to record all pertinent information to give to the physician. Then, the two individuals could exchange roles. Use LS–B as a student practice activity.*

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used in the review/summary.
- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheets to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

### **Part One: Short Answer**

1. Assertive communication is honest, direct talk that does not infringe upon the rights of another.
2. A nurse aide may report a problem to the charge nurse, who will report it to the doctor.
3. The important parts of a message are:
  - a. The date and time
  - b. The caller's name
  - c. The purpose of the call
  - d. Your name and title
  - e. A return phone number where the caller can be reached

### **Part Two: Manipulation**

1. When you walk away while I'm talking, I feel as if you don't care about me. I would prefer that you look at me when we're conversing.
2. When you are late, I feel frustrated. I would like it if we could agree on a time and stick to that time.
3. When I work with her, I feel so uncomfortable and sometimes frustrated. I would like to be assigned to another co-worker so that I can feel good about the job I am doing.

### **Part Three: Identification**

1. Subjective
2. Objective
3. Subjective

# Use Communication Skills Appropriately in the Workplace

## ► Part One: Short Answer

**Instructions:** Complete the following.

1. What is meant by “assertive communication”?
2. Give an example of the chain of command in reporting a problem in a health care setting.
3. Name five important pieces of information to write down when taking a message.

## ► Part Two: Manipulation

**Instructions:** Change each statement to an assertive style.

1. “You never listen to me.”



2. “You’re late again, as usual.”

3. “Don’t assign me to work with her again today—I can’t stand it!”

► **Part Three: Identification**

**Instructions:** Identify each statement as objective or subjective. Write an “O” for objective or an “S” for subjective next to each statement.

\_\_\_\_ 1. The patient states, “My head hurts.”

\_\_\_\_ 2. The pharmacist notes a rash on the patient’s arms.

\_\_\_\_ 3. The nurse aide states to her supervisor, “Mr. Williams’ arm hurts.”

# Employee Evaluation Meeting

## Performance Standard 4B.I

The student will use appropriate communication strategies when communicating with a supervisor in a mock employee evaluation meeting.

- ◆ *Utilizing Appearance and Nonverbal Clues:* Appears confident and at ease; uses nonverbal clues effectively to reinforce the intended message.
- ◆ *Utilizing Speaking Style, Voice, Language Use:* Uses appropriate assertive language; pronounces words clearly and distinctly; shows no sign of strain or tension in the voice; speaks in complete sentences; uses word choice appropriate to the message.
- ◆ *Demonstrating Effective Communication in the Workplace:* Communicates appropriately with a supervisor; uses assertive communication style.

## Procedures

1. ***In order to speak effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience (4B)***, students should be able to experience sufficient learning opportunities to develop the following skills:
  - ◆ Communicate effectively the intended message.
  - ◆ Use language that is clear, audible, and appropriate.
  - ◆ Demonstrate composure while confronting or rebutting opposing views.

Health Science Technology students need good communication skills, including the ability to communicate assertively with co-workers and supervisors. Employee evaluations are a part of the workplace, and students need to know how to conduct themselves appropriately in these situations.
2. Have students review and discuss the assessment task and how the rubric will be used to evaluate their work.
3. Each student must be familiar with assertive communication style and be able to apply this knowledge before the assessment.
4. Pair students randomly. Each pair will present a mock employee evaluation meeting between a supervisor and an employee under the supervisor in the chain of command.
5. Students will research the components of an employee evaluation meeting to assist them in creating a realistic scenario.
6. Students will use assertive communication style in the mock scenario with the supervisor.

7. Each scenario should contain a point of conflict between the employee and the supervisor.
8. Each group will have up to 30 minutes to prepare the mock evaluation and will then have time in front of the class to present its scenario.
9. The observers in the class should make notes on the assertive communications used and the verbal and nonverbal cues in the scenario for later discussion.
10. Evaluate each student's performance using the rubric. Add each student's scores to determine the performance level.

### **Time Requirements**

One to two class periods, depending on class

### **Resources**

- ◆ Writing materials
- ◆ Research materials
- ◆ Scoring Rubric

# Employee Evaluation Meeting

You and your partner will look over the research information on employee evaluation procedures, then create a short scenario that you will present to the class. The scenario should include communication between an employee and his or her supervisor that would appropriately take place during the evaluation process. You should include clear examples of the assertive communication style in the scenario, along with at least one example of conflict between the employee and the supervisor that is resolved with assertiveness from either participant in the evaluation.

## Research Information on Employee Evaluations

Employers who routinely review employee performance and who conduct regular employee evaluations reap tremendous benefits. The evaluation process nips a lot of employment problems in the bud. Employees will know what is expected of them; will receive feedback, praise, and criticism of their work; and will have notice of any shortfalls in their performance or conduct. Employers can recognize and reward good employees and identify and coach workers who are having trouble. And the communication involved in any good evaluation process ensures that an employer will stay in tune with the needs and concerns of the workforce.

Performance evaluations can also keep employers out of legal trouble. They help employers track and document employees' problems. If an employer ever needs to fire or discipline a worker, the employer will have written proof that the employee was given notice and a chance to correct the problem. This will go a long way toward convincing a jury or judge that the employer acted fairly.

Throughout the year, the performance of each employee should be tracked. A log should be kept for each worker, either on computer or on paper. Memorable incidents or projects involving that worker should be noted, whether good or bad. For example, an employer might note that a worker was absent without calling in, worked overtime to complete an important project, or participated in a community outreach program on behalf of the company.



## Evaluation Tips

Giving and receiving evaluations can be difficult. Some workers react to criticism defensively. And, sometimes, no one understands what merits a positive evaluation. If workers feel an employer takes it easy on some of them while coming down hard on others, resentment is inevitable. An employer can avoid these problems by:

- ◆ Being specific—Goals and standards set for workers should spell out exactly what the employees must do to achieve them. For example, an employer should not say “Work harder” or “Improve quality.” Instead, the employer should say “Increase sales by 20 percent over last year” or “Make no more than three errors per day in data input.” Similarly, when being evaluated, a worker should be given specific examples of what he or she did to achieve—or fall short of—the goal.
- ◆ Giving a deadline—The worker should be given a timeline to turn things around. If something should be done by a certain date, the employer should say so.
- ◆ Being realistic—If unrealistic or impossible goals and standards are set, workers will be disheartened and have little incentive to do their best, because they know they will still fall short. On the other hand, standards should not be too easy to achieve.
- ◆ Being honest—If the employer avoids telling a worker about performance problems, the worker won’t know that he or she needs to improve. Bad news must be given, even if it is uncomfortable.
- ◆ Being complete—The evaluation should be written so that an outsider reading it would be able to understand exactly what happened and why. The evaluation just might become evidence in a lawsuit. If it does, the employer will want the judge and the jury to see why the employee was rated as he or she was.
- ◆ Evaluating performance, not personality—Focus should be on how well (or poorly) the worker does the job, not on the worker’s personal characteristics or traits. For instance, the employee should not be characterized as “angry and emotional.” Instead, focus should be placed on the workplace conduct that is the problem—for example, an employer might say that the employee “has been insubordinate to the supervisor twice in the past six months. This behavior is unacceptable and must stop.”
- ◆ Listening to employees—The evaluation process will seem fairer to workers if they have an opportunity to express their concerns, too. Employees should be asked what they enjoy about their jobs and about working at the company. They should be asked about any concerns or problems they might have. The employer will gain valuable information, and employees will feel like real participants in the process. In some cases, the employer might even learn something that could change the evaluation.

*Adapted from: <http://www.nolo.com>: advice for employee evaluations.*

# Individual Participation

- ◆ Exceeds standard (8 total points)
- ◆ Meets standard (6–7 total points)
- ◆ Approaches standard (4–5 total points)
- ◆ Begins standard (2–3 total points)
- ◆ Absent (0–1 total points)

	Communication Strategy	Scenario Participation
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student pronounces all words clearly and distinctly.</li> <li>• The voice shows no signs of tension or strain.</li> <li>• The student speaks in complete sentences.</li> <li>• Word choice is always appropriate to the message.</li> <li>• Assertive communication is clear and direct without taking away from the other party.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student's role in the scenario is consistent and well balanced, with full participation.</li> <li>• The student participated fully in the research study and construction of the scenario.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student pronounces most words clearly and distinctly.</li> <li>• The student usually speaks without signs of tension or strain.</li> <li>• The student speaks in complete sentences most of the time.</li> <li>• Word choice is appropriate most of the time.</li> <li>• Assertive communication is frequent and mostly clear and direct, without taking away from the other party.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student's role in the scenario is mostly consistent and well balanced, with good participation.</li> <li>• The student participated most of the time in the research study and construction of the scenario.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student pronounces many words clearly and distinctly. Some mispronunciations occur.</li> <li>• The voice occasionally shows signs of strain and tension.</li> <li>• The student occasionally speaks in complete sentences. Some fragments occur.</li> <li>• Word choice is occasionally appropriate.</li> <li>• The student uses occasional examples of assertive communication that is sometimes clear and direct.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student occasionally demonstrates an active role in the scenario, with fair participation.</li> <li>• The student occasionally participated in the research study and construction of the scenario.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student pronounces few words clearly and distinctly. Many mispronunciations occur.</li> <li>• The voice frequently shows signs of tension and strain.</li> <li>• The student frequently uses incomplete sentences.</li> <li>• Word choice is rarely appropriate.</li> <li>• The student uses few examples of assertive communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student rarely demonstrates an active role in the scenario, with poor participation.</li> <li>• The student rarely participated in the research study and construction of the scenario.</li> </ul>
<b>Score</b>		

# ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

**Assertive communication** is a professional way to communicate on the job. It is an honest expression of your feelings or attitudes without infringing on the rights of others.

## Example:

“I need to tell you something, and I’d like for you to hear me out before you comment. Lately, after we have worked together, I’ve felt frustrated and overwhelmed. I am afraid of upsetting you, so I don’t always speak up when something happens that I am uncomfortable with. From now on, I’d like to try something different. When I’m feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, I’d like to stop what we are doing and consider the options. I know that will be a change in how we work together, but I think it will make us better as a team, and I will feel better about myself if I share my ideas with you.”



This example illustrates the three parts of an assertive message:

- a. **Empathy/validation:** Try to say something that shows you understand the other person's feelings and you are not trying to pick a fight.
- b. **Statement of problem:** Describe your feelings and tell why you need a change.
- c. **Statement of what you want:** Request for a specific change in the other's behavior.

### **How to Be Effectively Assertive:**

1. Use "I" statements.
2. Use facts, not judgments.
3. Express ownership of your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes.
4. Make clear, direct requests. Don't invite the person to say no.
5. Always use a low-level, pleasant voice.

Remember, one of the most common problems in communications is trying to read someone's mind or expecting that person to read yours. If you want people to respond to your ideas and needs, you must be able to say what those ideas and needs are in a way that makes others want to respond in a positive manner.

Website: University of Iowa (<http://www.uiowa.edu>)

# COMMUNICATING WITH A SUPERVISOR

**Objective comments** are generally more helpful than subjective ones. They are factual and to the point. Health care workers should strive to keep their comments objective rather than subjective.

## Examples:

Objective	Subjective
1. “Yesterday we worked with three aides to take care of our 60 residents. Some residents did not have their needs met.”	1. “We were so overworked yesterday. It must get better around here!”
2. “The nurse on evening shift does not talk to me or look at me. She does not respond when I call her by name. She talks with other staff members.”	2. “The nurse on evening shift does not like me.”



Verbal reporting to a supervisor may include both subjective and objective information as it relates to a patient's condition.

**Examples:**

1. "Mr. Jones has vomited twice in the last hour.	1. "Mr. Jones stated that he has a 'sick stomach' [direct quote from patient]."
2. "Mrs. Rollins is complaining of pain in her abdomen as a 10 on a scale of 1–10.	2. "Mrs. Rollins states that her stomach hurts."

# EXAMPLES OF PROPER CHARTING TECHNIQUE

Date	Time	Notes
5/11/06	1315	Requests not to eat lunch now. States, "My stomach is just a little upset."
		Denies any other discomforts. T-98.6 orally, BP 128/70, P 72 and regular.
		Placed call light within reach. Jan Jenkins, RN, notified of patient condition.
		D. Jefferson, CNA
5/11/06	1330	Patient appears to be asleep. Skin pink. No signs of distress.
		Jan Jenkins, RN
5/11/06	1400	Patient awake, still c/o abdominal pain and nausea. No emesis.
		Abdomen soft and non-distended with good bowel sounds.
		T-98.2 (ERROR jj) T-98.5, BP 122/80, P 77. Will call Dr. Miller for further orders.
		Jan Jenkins, RN

Adapted from: Sorrentino, page 61.



# Practicing Assertive Communication

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to practice a communication style that is useful in the workplace.

## Objectives

1. Apply the principle of assertive communication.
2. Distinguish between assertive, passive, and aggressive communication.

## Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

## Procedure

Express the following messages using the “I” message format of assertive communication (When..., then I Feel... I want/prefer...).

1. “I can never count on you to do what you tell me you will do.”
  
2. “Come on and go with us. You can do your homework later.”



3. "You're a slob. I'm tired of you messing this place up after I clean it up."
4. "You promised me that you would mow the lawn, and you didn't. You're completely irresponsible."
5. "I've already told you that I can't help you tonight. Leave me alone!"
6. "Get off my back!"
7. "You never listen to me when I'm talking to you."
8. "Stop interrupting me."
9. "You never appreciate all that I do for you."
10. "Gee, what a surprise. You're only an hour late tonight."

# Practicing Assertive Communication

## Suggested Answers:

1. “When I ask you to do something and you don’t follow through, I feel frustrated. I would prefer that you say you are unable to do it if you know you don’t have the time.”
2. “I appreciate that you guys want me to go with you, but I feel like I have to complete this assignment. I’ll feel anxious until it’s done. I’d like to go some other time.”
3. “When you don’t pick up your clothes and other belongings, I feel really frustrated. I would prefer that you try to help me keep this place cleaner.”
4. “When you make a promise to me, I feel like you will keep it, and then I’m disappointed when you don’t. I want you to try to take your promises more seriously and follow through on them.”
5. “When you ask for my help, I want to help you, but sometimes I can’t. When I can’t, I would like for you to accept that and let me finish what I am working on.”
6. “When I’m not feeling well, it really upsets me that you criticize my behavior. I would prefer that you be more patient with me when I ask you to give me some time alone.”
7. “When I talk to you, I feel like you are tuning me out, and that makes me feel frustrated and unimportant. I would like for you to look at me when I talk to you and let me know that you’re listening.”
8. “When I am talking and get interrupted, I feel frustrated and sometimes lose my train of thought. I would feel better if you would let me finish what I’m saying before you comment.”
9. “When I do things for you, I don’t feel like you appreciate my efforts. I would like it very much if you could acknowledge my efforts with “Thanks” when I do things for you.
10. “When we go out together and you are late, I feel like I don’t matter—like something else is more important than our time together. I would prefer your setting a time for us to get together and sticking to that time. I look forward to our time together and want it to continue.”

# Telephone Communications and Messages

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## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to give students practice in using telephone etiquette and in properly taking messages.

## Objective

Demonstrate proper telephone etiquette and how to take a message to ensure that it includes all the vital information left by a caller.

## Materials

- ◆ writing utensil
- ◆ paper
- ◆ message forms
- ◆ space to separate students into pairs

## Procedure

1. Ask each student to write out a brief message that he or she would leave with a friend's parent or other family member who might answer the phone in the absence of the friend.
2. The message should include information about a meeting the two friends will be attending together in the future, and the caller should leave the particulars of the meeting—date, time, and other details—in the message.
3. Place students in pairs back to back, and have student A deliver his or her “phone” message while student B records the message.
4. Have students compare notes to see if the message contains all the relevant data.
5. Facilitate the activity by moving between groups and monitoring for proper phone etiquette of the message taker.
6. This activity can be repeated with a more professional message related to health care, with student A being a patient calling his or her doctor's office and student B acting as the person at the office who answers the phone and records the message.