

Common Communication Barriers And How To Overcome Them

Potential Communication Barrier	What the SPEAKER Can Do (to overcome the barrier)	What the LISTENER Can Do (to overcome the barrier)
Beliefs & Value System	Develop ideas according to the listener's values & interests; be open to learning about people who are different from you; avoid being judgmental about the listener's cultural practices.	Be open to learning about people who are different from you; accept differences; avoid making premature judgments regarding the speaker's attitude about your culture.
Needs	Be sensitive to the emotional needs as well as the basic needs of the listener.	Be aware of the goals and purpose of the speaker.
Past Experiences	Be conscious of past experiences in similar situations; think of the listener's past experiences with social workers or public institutions.	Think of similar past experiences and how they may affect the way you view this experience; consider the speaker's similar past experiences.
Stereotypes	Confront rather than deny your own stereotypes; be willing to learn something about the listener; help the listener learn something about you.	Ask questions before drawing conclusions about the speaker's lifestyle, beliefs, and behaviors; be open to learning something about the speaker; share information about yourself with the speaker.
Preoccupation	Be aware of the listener's mood and attentiveness; consider the listener's other concerns.	Acknowledge your own outside distractions and consciously focus on the speaker.
Anger/Hostility	Be cautious about how you approach a subject that may offend the listener; remove yourself from a situation if you are becoming angry.	Avoid escalating the speaker's anger; it is more important to listen than to respond angrily; don't jump to conclusions.
Self-Concept	Recognize that a person's poor self-concept will interfere with communication; make such a person feel comfortable, relaxed, and respected.	Respect the speaker's perception of his/her role in the situation.
Language	Choose your words with the listener in mind; be aware of the emotional impact your words may have on the listener.	Repeat what the speaker has said in order to check your understanding; ask questions if the speaker uses unfamiliar words.
Defensiveness	Use descriptive and non-judgmental language; use a nonthreatening approach; make the listener feel secure and at ease.	Feel comfortable and secure about your own capabilities and accept the capabilities of others.
Status	Keep in mind the listener's status and role in his/her family and community.	Think of the speaker in terms of his/her qualifications and abilities.

