

H

ow to Communicate Love

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Are we born with the ability to LOVE? What happens with our ability to LOVE as we develop and age? Why are some people more LOVING than others?

This program topic will assist the participant to:

- identify how to LOVE
- assess behavior toward LOVE
- learn positive ways of LOVING
- learn effective communication for LOVE

Introduction

Do you know someone who has a loving personality? Do you notice that some people seem easier to love than others? Are you easy to love?

If you look at people who are easy to love, you will notice they have learned how to communicate love. Love normally comes from within a person. It is expressed in many ways, including smiles, body stance, posture, walking, and voice tone and quality. We all know some people who are loving, and they are a joy to be around. Their loving ways are refreshing and make our lives better. Let's explore how you can learn to communicate love.

Activity: Provide paper and pencil for each person. Ask members to list people they know who are easy to love. Then, ask them to describe what makes each person easy to love. Third, ask them to list one very loving person and what they believe makes that person so special and easy to love.

You may want to take a few minutes to list these individuals and the reason why they are easy to love. Perhaps they can be grouped by their main characteristic: appearance, voice, perception of caring, commitment, things they do, and things they don't do.

Skills for Communicating Love

The following are some "typical" skills common to individuals who have learned how to communicate love. A short description is provided. *You may want to have examples and allow the members to discuss their definition of each skill of communicating love. You may want to expand the list of skills. The important thing in this exercise is for each member to determine what behavior he/she sees as a positive skill in communicating love.*

Appearance: Appearance is the first step in communicating love. Appearing joyful, kind, and smiling both inside and out denotes a spirit of love. People who communicate love have learned that their face gives their first nonverbal message. Most people we perceive as easy to love have bright, open eyes, and they usually are smiling. They appear non-threatening and open to our approach to communicate.

Learning to love yourself will help create your personal appearance of love. If you do not know how to love yourself, you will not be able to love others. Loving yourself also means that you have a loving attitude in your actions and responses toward others; that you look for opportunities to help rather than be helped; that you communicate a loving appreciation of others with "thank you" and "please" as part of your vocabulary; that you forgive others and do not hold a grudge; and that you help people in need without thought of reward or recognition.

Activity: Using a handheld mirror large enough for individuals to see their face and expression as they smile and show their expression of joy to others, have each member take a turn looking in the mirror at his/her smile and joyful reflection that others are seeing. Allow each member an opportunity to see

his/her reflection in the mirror. Remind participants that their smile is their first communication of love.

Use these skills to become a loving person:

- Be kind to others through your actions and communication. Look for opportunities to help others.
- Express gratitude and appreciation freely and often to others.
- Use “thank you” and “please” as part of your verbal communication.
- Send thank-you notes and tell others about another person’s acts of kindness toward you.
- Forgive others and yourself daily.
- Help others in need; by doing so you will fulfill a greater need in yourself.

Our Needs: Needs play an important part in our communication of love. We all want three things in life: inclusion, love, and control. Each of these needs is very much a part of our behavior toward ourselves and others. How we perceive these needs being met will greatly affect our ability to communicate love.

Activity: Provide paper and pencil for each group. Divide into groups of four. Ask each group to develop a list of human needs. Allow five to ten minutes for developing list. Have each group read their list and copy it on a larger sheet of paper. Then ask which needs can be met by communicating love. Place a heart beside the needs that are identified as being met through communication of love. What the group will discover is through service and kindness to others, we communicate love.

How we communicate love to others is learned; we are not born with the ability to communicate love. Developing the following skills will increase your ability to communicate love.

- Follow the axiom — love others as you love yourself.
- Be tolerant and include others, appreciating their differences.
- Use good manners and loving language.
- Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- Practice self-control. Don’t threaten, hit, or hurt anyone with fist or words.
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.

Inclusive: To be included is something everyone wants. It is a basic human need. When individuals perceive they are not included, their behavior changes. Knowing how to make others feel included (like they belong to or are a part of something) is very important in the communication of love. Try these strategies to include others.

- Communicate the words “we” and “us.”
- Communicate appreciation and acceptance. This includes both body language and words.

Physical Affection: Individual needs for affection or love are different, but all individuals need some form of affection and love, such as a smile, kiss, hug, handshake, or pat on the back. It is important to understand the human need for some form of affection and love. Affection is an emotion that can be very powerful in the communication of love. You can:

- give a smile
- give a pat on the back
- give a warm handshake
- touch the person’s hand or arm
- hug the person if it’s appropriate (some people are huggers, but some are not)

Touch is important in communicating love. Everyone has some need for touch. As you develop your skills of communicating love to others, remember these strategies of touch:

- Not everyone accepts touching easily. It is a learned response that develops with trust.
- Gentle hand contact is a good beginning.
- Touch communicates strong emotions of love and often is the best communication when you are at a loss for words.

Activity: Have members stand and greet each other or say hello. Provide examples of how the greeting can be more loving, such as giving a handshake, touching the elbow as you shake the hand, hugging, smiling, saying kind words. Have the members express their feelings on how to warmly say hello to someone.

Remind members some people are sensitive to being touched. Respect others’ personal space and don’t cause a problem for yourself. Safe areas of touch usually are the hand, lower part of arm, or

shoulder. Affection also can be communicated through tone of voice, smile, and selection of words.

Learn to Communicate Love

Here is another secret in the communication of love. Because people want love and joy in their lives, they are attracted to positive behaviors of loving people.

Some things you can do to help you learn to communicate love:

- Keep a list of loving thoughts.
- Learn to know what makes you lovable.
- Learn to say “what’s good for you today” instead of saying “what’s wrong.”
- Be positive and have faith to love yourself and others.
- Always see the day as an opportunity to communicate love and happiness.
- Say “this will be a day of love” and believe it when you wake each morning.
- Remember the love that came your way that day when you go to bed at night.
- Learn that love comes from within. No one makes you love, we do it our self.

Strategies for Communicating Love

1. Confirm for yourself that you want to communicate love to others. Learn to know what makes you love yourself and others and begin to build on those strong foundations. Remember that love starts within each of us. It grows as a very powerful positive force that enables us to communicate love to ourselves and others.
2. Understand the needs of people and work to meet the needs of being included, receiving some form of love, and having some control.
3. Surround yourself with loving thoughts and ideas. Keep a loving attitude. Learn to take the path of love, not the path of hate and discontent.
4. Learn to smile and look others in the eye. Your face is your first method of communicating love to the world. It is your opening announcement that you are a loving person.

5. Learn to treat all people equally with a loving attitude. Always remember to care for the person. You may not agree with the behavior, but love the person. Give the person the benefit of the doubt when his or her behavior is not up to your expectations.
6. Remember the good in people and forget the bad. Find something to love in everyone and build on that something. Learn to communicate love in your communication with yourself and others. Be appreciative of others and let them know. Develop your loving attitude, which clearly states “I care about you” through facial expressions, voice, touch, inclusion, and especially positive actions.
7. Remember you can’t change people. You can only love them.

Reference

McCroskey-Richmond, *Interpersonal Communication*, Burgess Publishing, Morgantown, W.Va., 1992
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