

How can we communicate better?

Part of being in a healthy relationship is having good communication.

Below are some tips to help you and your partner communicate well.

If you are in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful using these tips. If you think any of these tips may put you in danger, don't try them. Talk to a CHN social worker if you are in an unhealthy relationship.



For good communication:

- ⇒ **Find the right time.** Find a good time to talk about things that are bothering you. Don't try to bring up a serious issue while your partner is doing something else or if they are stressed. Tell your partner you want to talk and plan a good time.
- ⇒ **Talk face to face.** Talk about serious issues in person, not in text messages or emails.
- ⇒ **Do not attack.** Even when we mean well, some words can come across as harsh. If your partner feels like you are attacking them, they may not hear your message. And they may be defensive. Start your sentences with "I" or "we", instead of "you". So, you may say, "I feel like *we* haven't been as close lately" instead of "You have been distant lately."
- ⇒ **Be honest.** Nobody is perfect! Say you are sorry when you make a mistake. Try not to make excuses. You will feel better and it will help make your relationship stronger.
- ⇒ **Check your body language.** Make eye contact when you're talking. Put away your cell phone or other things that might distract you. Focus on talking to your partner.
- ⇒ **Give yourself time to cool off.** If you get really mad about something, stop, take a step back, and breathe. Give yourself time to calm down. Talk to a friend. Take a walk. Listen to music. Do whatever helps you relax. Taking a break can keep things from getting worse.

Good communication is not always easy. At first, it may feel funny to use some of these tips. But these tips will help you to communicate better and build a healthy relationship.

How can we talk about STDs?

What should I tell my partner about STDs and HIV?

- ⇒ **Get tested every 6 months** for STDs and HIV, or anytime you have a new partner.
- ⇒ **Most people have no symptoms.** The only way to know for sure is to get tested.
- ⇒ **It shows you care.** Explain that you want to get tested to make sure you are both healthy, not because you don't trust your partner. Getting tested is not a sign that anyone has been cheating. By having this conversation, you're showing that you respect and care about your partner's health.
- ⇒ **Get treated.** If you have an STD or HIV, it is very important for you and your partners to get treated. All STDs and HIV can be treated and many can be cured.

Try saying something like:

"I'm kind of nervous to put this out there... but I think it's important that we go get tested together. Getting tested before we have sex will protect both of us. Why take a chance when we can know for sure?"

"I really feel I can trust you, and I'd like to tell you something very personal. I found out that I have an STD. A lot of people don't talk about it, but it's actually really common. Most people who have an STD don't even realize it. I'm telling you now so that we can take steps to have safer sex."

What if I need help telling my partner?

If you don't feel comfortable or safe talking to your partner, but you want to tell them about the STD anonymously, there are resources to help.



Visit www.inspot.org. This website will anonymously email your partners to tell them that they were exposed to an STD or HIV.



The Contact Notification Assistance Program can tell your partners that they were exposed to HIV, without ever identifying you. Call 212-693-1419.

Or, talk to your health educator, provider, or social worker at CHN.

**Getting tested for STDs is just part of staying healthy.
Nervousness is normal, so speak up!**