



Communicating in Different Situations: Part I

We communicate with people every day, but sometimes we do not adjust our communication style to the audience or situation. This can lead to confusion, hurt feelings, or misunderstandings. Learn how to adapt the way we communicate to different situations by considering the many factors that influence the effectiveness of our communication:

Think about the situation or occasion

The context of our communication makes a difference both in the way we engage with others and in the way they interpret our communication.

- Remember that time and place matter. A joke that would be a hit with our friends may not be appropriate at the office. Similarly, pouring our heart out to a dear friend is different from doing so with a young child.
- Identify the level of formality. Formal occasions like ceremonies and business presentations require more formal language and dress. Informal occasions like hanging out with our family or friends allow us to be more relaxed and casual.

Identify our goal

Know the purpose of our interaction so we can adapt our communication effectively. For example, if we want to build a friendship with a colleague, we may invite them out for a cup of coffee or ask them to join us for lunch. But if we want to keep our work and personal lives separate, we will probably keep our communication polite and professional.

Know our audience

To adapt our communication effectively, we need to understand who we are talking with. See things from their view and tailor our communication to them as much as possible.

- Recognize our relationship with the audience. With a good friend, we will probably be able to be more upfront and blunt. With a supervisor/supervisee, we will want to speak with respect. With a cashier, we may want to be friendly, but conservative.
- Acknowledge differences in personality. For example, extroverts like to communicate face-to-face, over the phone, and in large groups. They tend to think aloud. Introverts prefer to talk through emails, text messages, and in one-on-one conversations. They often need time to reflect before answering questions.
- Conduct an audience analysis. Look at the age span, gender, education level, values, cultures, family structures, and background experiences of those in our audience.



In Part II, we will continue with some more helpful tips.

If you are interested in receiving more information on communication or other relevant and useful information, remember that MyEAP is here to help. Contact us at eap@familiesinaction.net