

All humans communicate, so it's **easy** to assume that we actually know what we're doing when we have **conversations**. But is that a fair assumption when we consider that there are many opinions, experiences, and perspectives, involved in every interaction?

Becoming a better, more resilient communicator is like becoming better at anything. It requires learning the essential components of the task and practicing each of them - *forever*.

Consistently practicing each of the four things below will improve your skills as a communicator. This process will help you clarify your thoughts, articulate your expectations, build cooperative dialog, and increase your confidence in communicating with others.

The steps are simple. Simple does not mean easy. **Practice, practice, practice.**

Four Things To Do Forever



Communicate Clearly

- Start by **clarifying a few things for yourself**: Why is this conversation important? What do you hope will happen? Include objective and subjective details
- Ask core questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How & If
 - **Be curious** about ALL of the data involved
- Organize your data - objective and subjective - into a clear idea. Boil it down to its essence. Include facts and feelings
- Share that clear idea with the people who need to know it



Share Expectations

- Most people are not psychic, so review your assumptions
- Share **your** expectations & make sure to define your terms
 - **Be specific**: Timeframe, Process, Professionalism, Potential Pitfalls, etc.
- **How do you discover a counterpart's expectations? ASK.**



Get Commitment

- **This is a conversation. This step is dependent upon Communicating Clearly and Setting Expectations.**
- Ask if there is agreement:
 - "Will that work?" or "Do you agree?" or "Will you do it?"
 - **This is a Yes/No question - listen for the answer**
 - If no, why not? Stay curious
 - Work toward clarification and agreement
- Check for accuracy, clarity, and commitment



Follow Through

- Following-up requires clarity and curiosity
- Show commitment
- And then **uphold your end**
 - Check-in. Put it on the calendar, add notes if needed
- **Evaluate, revise, and keep going**

Practice Conversations - Applied Theory

For every person you work with and every conversation you have, you can apply these four steps. To practice, pick **one** topic that needs to be discussed and walk through the four steps. **Be as clear as possible in Steps 1 & 2.** Spending time here decreases stress and increases confidence quickly.



Resilient, Practical Communication Begins Here

Topic:	
Communicate Clearly	Ask yourself: Why is this conversation important? What do I hope will be the result?
Share Expectations	Ask yourself: What do I expect? Are these shared expectations? How do I know they are shared? Do I know the other person's expectations? <i>Clarifying expectations is vital to success.</i>
Get Commitment	This is a perfect place for a close-ended question! If the answer is No , stay curious and discover Why . Refine and discover what will work until everyone says Yes . <i>(Beware of answers like, "I get it" or "I hear you loud and clear." Those are positive statements that are not necessarily, "YES.")</i>
Follow Through	DO NOT FORGET THIS STEP. It's where trust and confidence are built.

Hypothesis: Preparing for conversations will improve my skill as a communicator. How might that contribute to the health of my professional interactions and to the organization as a whole?

Tested hypothesis: Did it work? To what extent? What needed revision? (Note: put this on the calendar & follow through.)