



COMMUNICATION CHEAT SHEET

A quick-reference card for recognizing your style and meeting communication differences with kindness.

No style is better. Communication styles are patterns, not diagnoses - and most people use more than one.

1 | FOUR COMMON COMMUNICATION STYLES

DIRECT & LITERAL

LOOKS LIKE

Uses clear words and specific requests.
Expects words to carry the meaning.
May sound blunt while aiming for clarity.

HELPFUL PHRASE

"Please tell me directly what you need."

CONTEXTUAL & INDIRECT

LOOKS LIKE

Softens requests or offers hints.
Reads tone, timing, and context.
May avoid asking to reduce pressure.

HELPFUL PHRASE

"Is that a request, preference, or idea?"

EXPRESSIVE & THINKING ALOUD

LOOKS LIKE

Talks to discover what they think.
May use detail, emotion, or repetition.
May want listening before advice.

HELPFUL PHRASE

"Do you want listening or problem-solving?"

REFLECTIVE & TIME-TO-PROCESS

LOOKS LIKE

Pauses before answering.
May prefer preparation or writing.
Often benefits from lower pressure.

HELPFUL PHRASE

"I care about this. Can I respond after I think?"

2 | IDENTIFY YOUR PATTERN

Circle either side - or both. There is no score.

Requests	☐ say it plainly	☐ soften or hint
Processing	☐ talk to think	☐ think, then talk
Meaning	☐ words first	☐ tone + context
Conflict	☐ address sooner	☐ pause, then return
Format	☐ spoken	☐ written

Remember: A blend is normal. Stress, safety, familiarity, and setting can change how you communicate.

3 | NAVIGATE MISMATCHES WITH KINDNESS

MISMATCH	KINDNESS BRIDGE	TRY SAYING
Literal + indirect	Clarify the message type.	"Is that a request, preference, or just sharing?"
Fast + reflective	Pause with a return time.	"Let's revisit this at 7:00."
Spoken + written	Use both formats.	"Can we talk, then text the plan?"
High + low expression	Do not equate intensity with care.	"I care, even if I show it differently."

When stuck: "I think we may be communicating differently. What did you mean, what did I hear, and what would help now?"