

The five secrets of effective communication

1. The disarming technique

You find some truth in what the other person is saying, even if you feel convinced that what they are saying is totally wrong, unreasonable, irrational, or unfair.

2. Empathy

You try to see the world through the other person's eyes. You put yourself in his or her shoes.

Thought empathy: You paraphrase the other person's words.

Feeling empathy: You acknowledge how they're probably feeling, given what they are saying to you.

3. Inquiry

You ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.

4. I "feel" statements: You express your feelings with "I feel" statements such as "I feel upset" rather than with "you" statements such as "you're wrong" or "You're making me furious".

5. Stroking: You find something genuinely positive to say to the other person, even in the heat of battle. This indicates that you respect the other person, even though you may be angry with each other.