

Tips for Effective Communication



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Be Assertive—Not Aggressive or Passive

- ▶ **Be assertive:**
 - ▶ Confident
 - ▶ Direct
 - ▶ Reassuring
- ▶ ***Avoid* being passive:**
 - ▶ Accepting without questioning or pushing back
- ▶ ***Avoid* being aggressive:**
 - ▶ Intense or harsh
 - ▶ Eager to fight or disagree

Being Assertive Versus Being Passive or Aggressive: Example

“Why should I stay home or tell you who I’ve seen recently?”

Assertive

“You’d like to know why I’m asking you to stay at home. Well, by staying separated, you’re helping your loved ones and community stay safe. We strongly recommend that you—and lots of other people like you—stay at home so we can stop the spread.”

Passive

“Oh, well, you don’t need to if you don’t want to.”

Aggressive

“You have to stay home because we said you have to. And you should probably listen because that’s what’s good for you and your kids.”

Use Simple Words

- ▶ **Avoid technical words**

- ▶ Case
- ▶ Contact
- ▶ Infectious period

- ▶ **Use simple words**

- ▶ Someone who is sick
- ▶ Someone who's been around a sick person
- ▶ The time in which you can spread coronavirus to others

Using Simple Words: Example

“Why are you calling me?”

Don’t

- ▶ *“You came in close contact with a case during their infectious period.”*

Do

- ▶ *“I’m calling to let you know that you were recently around someone who tested positive for coronavirus. Because you spent some time with them, you may also get sick.”*

Communicate One Message or Question at a Time

- ▶ **One question at a time**

- ▶ Asking multiple questions simultaneously will confuse people
- ▶ Asking multiple questions at once will not give you clear answers

- ▶ **One message at a time**

- ▶ Your goals are to get information and ALSO *give* information
- ▶ People take time to process new information as you talk
- ▶ Check in frequently to see if they understand you

Communicating One Question at a Time: Example

Don't

- ▶ *"Do you have a fever, any shortness of breath, or a cough?"*

(If they respond, "yes," then do they have all three symptoms? Just fever?)

Do

- ▶ *"Do you have a fever?"*
- ▶ *"What symptoms have you had since you got sick last Monday?"*

One question at a time!

Avoid Common Pitfalls

- ▶ **Avoid common pitfalls**
 - ▶ Going too slowly or too quickly
 - ▶ Sounding unfriendly, bored, or annoyed
 - ▶ Talking too quietly or too loudly
 - ▶ Interrupting others

- ▶ **Finally, do NOT offer personal opinions**
 - ▶ Provide facts
 - ▶ Know the limits of what you know
 - ▶ Refer people to a healthcare worker for medical advice

Avoiding Common Pitfalls: Example

“So, you’re saying that I’ve been near someone while they were sick with COVID-19. Well, do you think I should be worried if I have diabetes?”

Don’t

- ▶ *“I don’t think you should worry about that. It doesn’t seem important.”*

Do

- ▶ *“You know, that’s not something that I’m an expert on. I suggest that you chat with your doctor about that.”*

Example: Failing to Apply the Tips for Effective Communication

Drew: *Hi. Larry?*

Larry: *Uh, hello. This is Larry. Who is this?*

Drew: *[Interrupting] Hi, I'm from the health department. I'm calling about your recent lab test. Could you confirm your birthday for me? 1949, right? And your address?*

Larry: *Oh. Well, actually it's 1947, October 25th, 1947. And I live at 510 Gail Dr.*

Drew: *Great, well I'm calling to let you know that you're a case of coronavirus, and you're probably still in your infectious period.*

Larry: *[Growing impatient] Yes, my doctor said the test was positive. But they didn't say if there's a treatment yet. Do you know?*

Drew: *I think they'll probably have one soon, if they don't already. But, listen, I'm just calling to let you know that you should stay inside. You have to because we said you do.*

Video: *Failing to
Apply the Tips
for Effective
Communication*

Review: Failing to Apply the Tips for Effective Communication

Drew: <i>Hi. Larry?</i>	
Larry: <i>Uh, hello. This is Larry. Who is this?</i>	
Drew: <i>[Interrupting] Hi, I'm from the health department. I'm calling about your recent lab test. Could you confirm your birthday for me? 1949, right? And your address?</i>	The interviewer did not introduce himself and also interrupted Larry. The interviewer also asked for Larry's birthday and address at the same time.
Larry: <i>Oh. Well, actually it's 1947, October 25th, 1947. And I live at 510 Gail Dr.</i>	
Drew: <i>Great, well I'm calling to let you know that you're a case of coronavirus, and you're probably still in your infectious period.</i>	The interviewer used technical terms (such as "case" and "infectious period").
Larry: <i>[Growing impatient] Yes, my doctor said the test was positive. But they didn't say if there's a treatment yet. Do you know?</i>	
Drew: <i>I think they'll probably have one soon, if they don't already. But, listen, I'm just calling to let you know that you should stay inside. You have to because we said you do.</i>	The interviewer offered his opinion about potential treatments for COVID-19. Then, the interviewer was aggressive in explaining that Larry should stay inside.

Example: Correctly Applying the Tips for Effective Communication

Amy: *Hello! May I please speak with Larry Murray?*

Larry: *This is Larry. Who is this?*

Amy: *Hi! This is Amy Jones from the health department. I'm calling about your lab test from last Monday. Is now a good time?*

Larry: *Oh, yeah—that. Yes, now's OK.*

Amy: *Thanks, Larry. Before we keep talking, I need to check your date of birth. I have here that you were born in 1947 ...*

Larry: *Yup, October 25th.*

Amy: *Great, thank you. I'm calling because you were tested for coronavirus. Has someone already talked with you about the results?*

Larry: *Yeah ... I was positive. My doctor said you might be calling. But didn't mention any treatments. Anyway, how can I help you?*

Amy: *Well, your doctor would be the best person to ask about any treatments. I'm just here to check on you, give you some instructions, and ask a few follow-up questions. We're calling everyone who tests positive to make sure that they and our communities have what they need to stay safe.*

*Video: Correctly
Applying the
Tips for
Effective
Communication*

Review: Correctly Applying the Tips for Effective Communication

Amy: <i>Hello! May I please speak with Larry Murray?</i>	
Larry: <i>This is Larry. Who is this?</i>	
Amy: <i>Hi! This is Amy Jones from the health department. I'm calling about your lab test from last Monday. Is now a good time?</i>	The interviewer introduced herself, quickly stated the call purpose, and checked that now's the best time to talk.
Larry: <i>Oh, yeah—that. Yes, now's OK.</i>	
Amy: <i>Thanks, Larry. Before we keep talking, I need to check your date of birth. I have here that you were born in 1947 ...</i>	Interviewer asked one question at a time.
Larry: <i>Yup, October 25th.</i>	
Amy: <i>Great, thank you. I'm calling because you were tested for coronavirus. Has someone already talked with you about the results?</i>	Interviewer thanked case. Before saying the positive result, the interviewer asked Larry what he already knew.
Larry: <i>Yeah ... I was positive. My doctor said you might be calling. But didn't mention any treatments. Anyway, how can I help you?</i>	
Amy: <i>Well, your doctor would be the best person to ask about any treatments. I'm just here to check on you, give you some instructions, and ask a few follow-up questions. We're calling everyone who tests positive to make sure that they and our communities have what they need to stay safe.</i>	The interviewer did not provide any information about treatment and did not respond defensively although Larry was clearly upset. The interviewer continued to assert herself in a friendly manner without being harsh.