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Avoiding Breakdowns in Communication

By Dr. Hap LeCrone

1. Try to understand how the other individual in a conversation feels by putting yourself in their shoes. Focus on what they are saying and the feelings that are associated with the words. Resist the urge to shift your thinking away from the other individual and on to your own planned response to them.
2. Try to maintain eye contact when possible.
3. Be sensitive to the possibility that the listener has not heard you. If you suspect that this is possible, ask him to tell you what he thought he heard. Explore with them, if necessary, the meaning of what you are trying to convey to them.
4. If you are not completely sure that you understand the other person's meaning in a conversation, stop and explore this with them, rather than letting the conversation grow and develop on inaccurate assumptions.
5. Analyze your goals in conversation and see if instead of listening you instead often are attempting to change the other person and control the outcome of the conversation.
6. Refrain from blaming type statements such as "You should have known better" or "You always foul things up."
7. Refrain from letting your own sense of inadequacy or insecurity interfere with your ability to hear what the other person is saying. Individuals with poor self-esteem often misinterpret what is being said to them, because of their own negative self-talk. While listening to the individual communicating, they may be making false assumptions such as, "Their lack of attentiveness to me in this conversation means they don't care or they don't like me."