

Build Rapport for Better Communication

"I'm having trouble communicating with a colleague at work. He just doesn't listen to me." This is a common complaint among my clients. There are many reasons why two people can have difficulty communicating, and although it may be interesting to delve into those reasons, it can be counter productive. Instead practice some of these techniques and learn how to gain rapport. You may find it is the answer to your problem.

When two people are in rapport, they naturally mimic each other's body language, speak in similar ways and focus their attention on a common subject. If you learn to consciously adopt these behaviors, you can gain rapport and open up the lines of communication.

Here are a few suggestions on how to gain rapport:

1. Eliminate obstacles between you and the other person

The next time you see the person with whom you have difficulty communicating, sit or stand next to him or her. Don't position yourself directly face-to-face. Also, try to avoid any obstruction such as a table or wall between you and the other person. Notice any differences in the interaction.

2. Match the other person's behavior

If the other person talks quickly, speed up your speech to his or her pace. If the person speaks quietly, soften your voice to match his or hers. You can also match their body language. If he or she is sitting crossed legged, gradually adjust your posture and cross your legs in the same manner. Be sure to imitate their behaviors slowly and gradually so they don't take notice. If you adjust your speech or posture too quickly or all at the same time, they might think you are mocking them and then you are out of rapport.

3. Guide the other person's behavior to match yours

Once you have matched the other person's behaviors for a bit, you may find the conversation starting to flow somewhat easier. Then little by little adjust your behaviors to your level. This works especially well when the other person is irate or angry. After matching an angry person's loud or forceful tone of voice, gradually lower your voice and slow your rate of speech. Watch how the other person follows your lead and the lines of communication widen.

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