

9 Ways to be a Positive Communicator

1. Shout Praise, Whisper Criticism - This phrase comes from the original Olympic Dream Team and Detroit Pistons coaches Chuck Daly and Brendan Suhr. They won NBA Championships and an Olympic Gold medal with a lot of talent and great communication. They gained the trust of their players and built winning teams by praising in public and constructively criticizing in private. Shouting praise means you recognize someone in front of their peers and whispering criticism means you coach them to get better. Both build better people and teams.

2. Smile More - When you share a real smile it not only produces more serotonin in your brain but in the brain of the recipient of your smile. Just by smiling at someone you are giving them a dose of serotonin, an anti-depressant. Never underestimate the power of a smile. As a positive communicator you have the power to make someone feel better just by smiling.

3. Don't Complain - When you complain you lose power, effectiveness and credibility as a communicator and leader. Most of all complaining is toxic and sabotages you and your team. Complaining is like vomiting. Afterwards you feel better but everyone around you feels sick. I know it's a gross analogy but you'll never forget it.

4. Encourage - Truett Cathy said, "How do you know if a man or woman needs encouragement? If they are breathing." We all need encouragement and positive communicators encourage and inspire others to do more and become more than they ever thought possible. Great communicators are great encouragers.

5. Spread Positive Gossip - Instead of sharing negative gossip, be the kind of communicator who spreads positive news about people. My college lacrosse teammates Mike Connelly and Johnny Heil are famous for this. Whenever you talk to them they are always praising our mutual friends. "Did you hear how awesome so and so is doing? Their kids are doing great!" They never say a negative word about anyone. They always spread the positive news and the best part is that you know when you are not around they are likely sharing something positive, not negative about you.

6. Sometimes You Have to Listen More and Talk Less - Positive communicators don't just talk. They listen. They ask questions and really listen. Research shows that when people feel like they are seen and heard there is a moistening in the eyes and yet in 90% of our conversations there is no moistening in the eyes. Positive communicators make others feel important by listening to them and truly hearing what they have to say.

7. Welcome Feedback - Positive communicators also listen to and welcome ideas and suggestions on how they can improve. They don't fear criticism. They welcome it knowing it makes them better. They send a clear signal to their team, customers, coaches, etc. that they are always willing to learn, improve and grow. Positive communicators say "I'm open. Make me better. Let's get better together."

8. Celebrate Success - Instead of focusing on what went wrong each day, positive communicators focus on what went right. They celebrate their successes, even the small ones, knowing that small wins lead to big wins.

9. Give High Fives, Handshakes, Pats on the Back, Fist Bumps and Hugs When Appropriate - Positive communication isn't just verbal. It's also physical. Several studies have demonstrated the benefits of physical contact between doctors and patients, teachers and students and professional athletes. For example in one study the best NBA teams were also the touchiest (high fives, pats on the back, hugs). In a world where physical touch has become taboo because of misuse and abuse we must

remember that it is a way we humans communicate naturally and is very powerful and beneficial when done appropriately with good intention. Personally I'm a fist bumper and a hugger. When I meet people at speaking engagements I give them a choice. Bump or Hug. Whichever they are more comfortable with is great with me.

-Jon