

# Useful skills

## for a good decision maker



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## Effective communication

### Asking open questions

Closed questions are yes/no questions. The power stays with the questioner, and minimal information is being sought.

Open questions start with: How? What? Who? Where? When? The questioner is seeking information and the person being asked feels empowered, especially when they are listened to carefully.

### Listening skills

The ability to listen to others in an open, non-judgmental way is an important aspect of being an effective communicator and in solving problems.

## Assertiveness or self confidence

This involves respecting and valuing yourself and other people. This skill is learned through experience and practice, and by observing others who are role models.

## Creative problem solving and critical analytical skills

These skills mean being able to ask: 'What is the problem?', and then brainstorming all possible solutions.

## Some do's and don'ts

### • Do

- ✓ Ask others for help. They will if they can!
- ✓ Help others who ask you for help—as much as you can!
- ✓ Notice what you have to offer and be positive about your ability to contribute!
- ✓ Build on your strengths!
- ✓ Acknowledge your successes, no matter how small!
- ✓ Ask questions when you are unclear!
- ✓ Take on new challenges no matter how unconfident you may feel initially. Sometimes the deep end is the only way to go!
- ✓ Set daily goals and acknowledge yourself for achieving them!
- ✓ Have a rest from setting daily goals if it all gets too much!
- ✓ Keep your word!
- ✓ Look your best. It'll give you confidence!
- ✓ Remember to say 'thank you'. A handwritten note or phone call works wonders!
- ✓ Give out your business card at every opportunity. It can include your name, contact details, qualifications, areas of interest or expertise.

### • Don't

- ✗ Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's the only way to find out what you need to know!
- ✗ Don't compare yourself to others. It's a futile exercise!
- ✗ Don't put yourself or others down. It's a bad habit!

## Negotiation skills

These involve creatively engaging in finding a solution to a problem that satisfies all parties. They are particularly useful tools in conflict management.

## Networking

This is the practice of linking up with others to give you greater access to ideas, people, support and opportunities. Networking is a two-way process and good networkers take an interest in what others are doing.

## Understanding the stages of behaviour change

Individuals and organisations can take many years to make a behaviour change depending on what stage they are at. The stages are:

1. Pre-contemplation—they are unaware that change is desirable.
2. Contemplation—they become aware that change may be desirable, but want more evidence.
3. The decision to change is made.
4. The person or organisation makes the change.
5. The behaviour change is consolidated.

At any time the person or organisation may return to an earlier stage. For example, a person may give up smoking or start an exercise program (Stage 4), last a few weeks, then return to their previous behaviour (Stage 2).

## Capacity to maintain a balanced life

In order to keep a balance and maintain your health and well being it's important to plan activities in all the areas that are important to you. For example, career, health and fitness, spirituality, relationships, creativity and leisure, personal growth, education and development.

## Understanding the 'diffusion of innovations' theory

This argues that a population is made up of three groups: opinion leaders, followers, and laggards. If we want to introduce a new activity or behaviour, we need to get twenty per cent of the population to make the desired change. That is, the opinion leaders. Once the opinion leaders change, it is argued, the change cannot be stopped because the rest of the population will follow.

## Recognising when it's time to move on

Over time priorities change. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, it makes room for others to make a contribution.

*'...I just think that it is a good idea not to get too stuck in what we are doing for our whole life. I know that this wouldn't suit everybody, because some people like to stick to the one area of work and concentrate on that. But I think it is a good idea to get variety out of life because it is very short.'* Judy Henderson

## Skills specific to decision making

This includes understanding and managing an organisation and its structure, meeting procedures, reading and understanding a financial statement and understanding the legal duties and responsibilities of committee members.

