

# Coping in Stressful Times: Healthy Communication

In stressful times we may find ourselves getting into conflict more easily. If you are in a conversation where you are having a strong emotion you can use...

**S**

Stop whatever you are doing.  
This may mean saying you need a break or not speaking for a moment

**STOP**

**T**



Take a deep breath.  
Use your breath to calm yourself down

**O**

Observe your thoughts and your body. How are you feeling? What is happening?



**P**

Proceed... or don't.  
Use the information you gathered to make a decision



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After you have used STOP, use **assertive communication** to express yourself with others.

### What is assertive communication?

- Type of communication used to address your needs and concerns
- Involves being honest and clear with others while respecting their needs as well



### How to assertively tell someone how you feel:

- Use "I feel" statements to describe how another's *behaviour* made you feel ("I feel hurt when you don't include me.", "I feel sad when you use that tone with me.")
- Don't blame: blaming others ("You never include me!", "You are so rude!") only leads to defensiveness
- Describe how another person's actions affected you



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## How to assertively make requests:

- Use "I would like if you could" statements ("I would like if you could let me know in advance when the plans change.")
- Elaborate with "I feel" statements ("I feel overwhelmed with this project and how others have not offered to delegate our tasks. Could someone else please divide up this week's tasks?")
- Use short, simple requests
- Recognize that they may say "no"



## How to assertively disagree:

- Use "I think" statements ("I think this topic might be better. Could we discuss the pros and cons of the options?")
- Explain your reasoning clearly and simply
- Remember: It is always okay to say "no" to others as well
- Resist apologizing

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## General communication tips:

- **Be vulnerable and open with your feelings:** It can be scary but it helps others understand your perspective and your needs/wants
- **Remember to actively listen:** Looking at the person, not interrupting, and not planning your response in your head
- **Be calm and open when starting the conversation:** It sets the tone for the conversation
- **Remember the goal is not to win the argument...** the goal is understanding!



## Community Resources



### Crisis lines:

Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868)

[www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

TALK line (613-544-1771)

[www.telephoneaidlinekingston.com](http://www.telephoneaidlinekingston.com)



### Counselling:

Resolve Counselling (613-549-7850)

[www.resolvecounselling.org](http://www.resolvecounselling.org)

Maltby Center (613-546 8535)

[www.maltbycentre.ca](http://www.maltbycentre.ca)