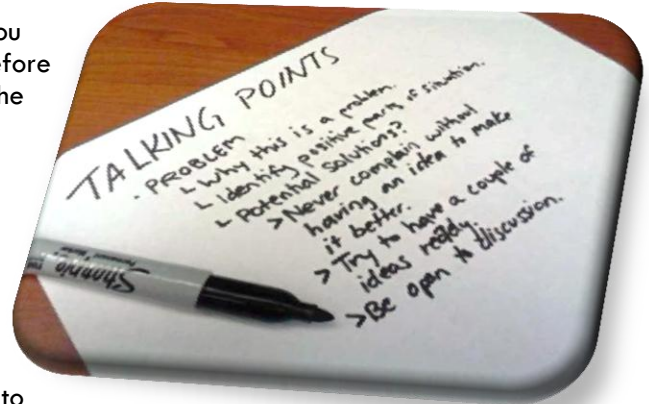


Effective Communication

One of the best skills you can have in any situation is how to effectively communicate with those around you. In college, this is important for forming professional relationships connections with people, especially **teachers and staff members**. These connections can help you obtain new resources to help you in your life as well as potential recommendations and references for future transfers to universities, job opportunities, or future careers. Here are a few tips on how to be an effective communicator in college:

1. PREPARATION

Before bringing something up to anyone, think about what it is you really want to say. This might mean jotting down a few points before you approach the person to organize your thoughts. Getting to the point saves time and confusion for everyone. If you're talking to someone like an instructor, this can help eliminate any feelings of nervousness. One of the biggest benefits of thinking about this ahead of time is that if it involves a potentially confrontational aspect, you can plan out how to make clear what the problem is and work together with the individual to come to a solution.



2. RESPECT

One of the number one mistakes that people make when talking to someone is that they don't realize how disrespectful they might be being. Always know the name of the person you are talking to, especially instructors. Many students go an entire semester without learning their instructors' names, showing that they barely think of them as human. It's disrespectful to everyone and it cuts you off from potentially beneficial relationships. Acting polite is not the same as showing respect, especially if you don't bother to consider the circumstances or opinions of the other party. Honestly try to see the other person's statements from their point of view to understand them and do not criticize, condemn, discriminate against, or complain about the other person regardless of your opinions. It helps no one to do anything but work for a better future, rather than focus on things you don't like.

3. BODY LANGUAGE



Flashing a smile is nice and it helps others feel comfortable when talking to you, but it's far from the only thing that can improve a professional relationship. When you speak to someone, make eye contact with them. This shows that you are engaged in the conversation. Keep your arms uncrossed and face the person you're speaking with. Keeping your arms crossed puts you in a "closed off" position and makes it appear as though you do not want to speak with someone. Do not under any circumstances touch the other person for anything other than a handshake or shoulder pat. Unwanted touches to people other than close friends such as hugging, head patting, or other informal behavior can make the other person uncomfortable or even belittled, even if you only mean it with the best of intentions. Additionally, show that you are being attentive. Never be on your cell phone, have headphones in, or play games while you are trying to speak to someone.

4. CONFRONTATION

A difference of opinion does not mean it is time to break out the gladiator armor. There isn't room for stubbornness, and you won't always find people willing to cooperate. Making the first move to show how things should be done can often inspire others to come around to better behavior. Problems are only solved when two people allow themselves to see each other's point of view. Don't be afraid to admit when you're wrong. Stubbornly refusing to change your views in the face of the facts generates frustration for everyone, especially when no one is going to shame you for making a mistake. You're in college- it's a learning experience!

5. SUPPORT YOURSELF

Your actions outside of the conversation are important as well. If you are always trying to do your best, it will show and it will inspire others to want to talk to you. If you slack around and do not put in your best effort, it causes people to think less of you and therefore be less likely to support you. Don't be afraid to ask questions to get the support you need and participate in discussions. If you do participate in discussions, make sure that you are prepared for it. As great as passion is, logic and factual evidence that you found to support yourself in a discussion goes a lot farther than "I believe this and therefore it must be true." This goes for in and out of classes, college, and the rest of your life.