

Some people tend to spoil good communication in a number of ways: by judging the other person; by always sending a solution; or by avoiding the other's emotional concerns. These behaviours get in the way of good quality expressive communication and relationships.

■ Judging

Criticising

Making a negative evaluation of the other person, 'You brought it on yourself . . .'

Name calling

Putting down or stereotyping the other person, 'You are just another insensitive male'.

Diagnosing

Playing emotional detective – analysing, 'Just because you went to college'.

Praising evaluatively

Over-praising, or manipulating by praise, can produce a defensive response, 'You're such a good girl, will you . . .'

■ Sending solutions

Ordering

A solution sent coercively can produce resistance, resentment and sabotage, especially when backed by force, 'will you talk to me'.

Threatening

A solution sent with an emphasis on punishment, 'Do it or else I'm leaving', produces the same results as ordering.

Moralising

Telling another person what they should or ought to do – it is demoralising and fosters anxiety and resentment.

Excessive/inappropriate questioning

Closed-ended questions can be real conversation stoppers, answered in a few words, 'Are you tired now?' (closed). 'How are you feeling now?' (open).

Advising

Giving a solution to their problems implies a lack of confidence in the other person's ability to understand and to cope. 'If I was you I would . . .', sometimes the person may not want advice but may want to be listened to.

■ Avoiding the other's concerns

Diverting

Pushing the other's problem aside through distraction. 'Don't dwell on it, let's talk about something else.' A form of emotional withdrawal.

Logical argument

When another person is under stress or very emotional, an appeal to logic without consideration of the emotions can be infuriating, and a way of avoiding emotional involvement.

Reassuring

Trying to stop the other person from feeling the negative emotions he or she is experiencing, 'Don't worry, everything will work out in the end.' It can be a form of emotional withdrawal.

Adapted from **Bolton** (1986).