

1. Explain WHAT and WHY you need something or want to suggest a change on the job. This will assist the consumer in understanding your concern. It will also help them understand how important it is to you. **CLARITY**
2. Listen! Consumers probably won't listen to you unless they feel you are willing to listen them, too. By listening, you tell them you value their opinions and respect them. Listening is also the first step needed for solving problems or resolving conflicts. **LISTEN**
3. Try to make every effort to speak in "I" statements. For example, "*I am frustrated because we constantly run out of cleaning supplies. I can't clean the bathroom well without them. Can we talk about ways I can assist you in keeping supplies available?*" The pattern is: "I see/hear/feel (state the issue at hand). It makes me feel (state your feelings) I need (state a possible solution)." **"I" STATEMENTS**
4. Attempt to maintain eye contact with your consumer(s) when you are speaking with them. Let them know that you are interested in what they have to share. **EYE CONTACT**
5. Take responsibility for your own feelings and respect the feelings your consumers show. Remember – people's feelings are their own and no one can tell them they *do not* or *should not* feel a particular way. **FEELINGS**
6. Remember to accept your consumer as they are and be open to how they may change over time. Be respectful of a person's right to be an individual rather than offering criticism. **ACCEPTANCE**
7. Sometimes, difficulty understanding may arise from cultural differences or language barriers. If your consumer's first language is different from yours, you may want to ask your consumer to translate key words and phrases. This will help you both communicate on a daily basis as well as prepare to respond to an emergency. **CULTURE**
8. Keep an open line of communication. Tell them you want to discuss any concerns they have or behaviors that might be offensive or out of the ordinary. You may have cultural differences that seem unusual and need to be understood. **OPEN LINE**

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\* This information has been adapted from the "Effective Communication for Consumers & Their Personal Assistants" hand out by Community Resources for Independent Living (CRIL) 510-881-5743.