

The following excerpts were taken for **Group Works: Getting Things Done, Effective Communication** by The University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Bulletin #6103.
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Your group is made up of people who share a common interest and commitment, and yet perhaps see things from a variety of perspectives. Effective communication is a way this diverse group of people will be able to understand the issues and make decisions for effective change.

When you confront difficult issues, listening is more important than speaking or any other form of expression...To improve communication, recognize the importance of listening and make listening a key part of your group's culture.

Active listening

- ▶ saves time,
- ▶ helps speakers clarify what they are saying, and
- ▶ reduces emotions that block clear thinking.

If half of the equation in communicating is active listening, the other half is speaking and expressing what you think, feel or want in a clear, true and nondefensive way...Examples of body language that support effective communication include an open body stance, sitting on the edge of your chair and focusing your eyes on the other person...While working in group settings, you are bound to encounter conflicts and feelings of anger. Anger is one of the least understood emotions. It can provide information and stimulate energy that can be used positively.

Things to remember when you are angry:

- ▶ use "I" statements,
- ▶ be descriptive,
- ▶ avoid judgments.

Receiving another person's anger can be challenging. Here are ways to make it easier:

- ▶ understand your own anger or emotions and how they might affect your response,
- ▶ acknowledge the thoughts, ideas or feelings of the other person,
- ▶ rephrase what you heard the person say,
- ▶ get agreement on what the issue is,
- ▶ invite the other person to join you in addressing the issue,
- ▶ take action and follow up,
- ▶ if the other person is not receptive to reaching an agreement or acting with civility, let it go and disengage from the interaction.

Dialogue is continued thoughtful exchange about what matters to us. Practice:

- ▶ allow others to finish their thoughts,
- ▶ respect others' thoughts, feelings, views and realities,
- ▶ listen deeply without needing to fix, rescue, counter, argue or resist.

The best way to improve your dialogue skills is to listen in a supportive way and see what happens...Please read more.