

# **HELPFUL COMMUNICATION SKILLS<sup>i</sup>**

The following four communication skills are ve

Avoid: “You didn’t show up, and I waited for an hour. You could have at least called me and let me know that you wouldn’t be there. You are irresponsible.” Take care that the following actions and behaviors are congruent with an honest, open heart:

- Body language: slouching, turning away, pointing a finger;
- Timing: speaking too fast or too slow;
- Facial expression: smiling, squirming, raising eyebrows, gritting teeth;
- Tone of voice: shouting, whispering, sneering, whining; and
- Choice of words: biting, accusative, pretentious, emotionally laden.

Results:

“I” messages present only one perspective. Allowing the other person to actually have a point of view and hearing it doesn’t mean that he or she is right. “I” messages communicate both information and respect for each position. Again, this skill moves both parties along to the problem-solving stage.

## **Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing focuses on listening first and then reflecting the two parts of the speaker’s message — *fact* and *feeling* — back to the speaker. Often, the fact is clearly stated, but a good listener is “listening between the lines” for the “feeling” part of the communication. Using this skill is a way to check out what you heard for accuracy — did you interpret what your mentee said correctly? This is particularly helpful with youth, as youth culture/language change constantly. Often words that meant one thing when mentors were young could have an entirely different meaning for youth today.



## **Open-Ended Questions**

Open-ended questions are intended to collect

**Be prepared to give your own answer.** You are focusing on the young person, but she may also want to turn the question in your direction

---

<sup>i</sup> Courtesy of Mass Mentoring Partnership, Mentoring 101 Train the Trainer Curriculum.