

Example of Negative Communication

J: Why didn't you call me back?

M: What are you talking about?

J: Hello! Why didn't you call me back?

M: I was busy – what's the big deal?

J: What's the big deal! What's the big deal! You said you were going to call me at 4 p.m. I waited for you to call, and waited and waited.

M: So I made a mistake, sue me. What's the big deal anyway?

J: The big deal is I waited until 4:30 and was late for my 5:00 o'clock appointment. You caused me to be late!

M: You were the one who was late for this meeting. Don't get pissed at me!

J: You didn't call me today. You didn't call me yesterday when you were supposed to. You never do what you say you are going to do.

M: So, now it's all my fault? Is that what you're saying? It's all my fault? Yes, I guess I'm the loser.

J: Yeah, I guess you are the loser!

M: You always come down on me. You were late getting home two weeks ago last Friday. Did I throw a hairy fit? Nooooo. You just need to learn to relax and take things in stride.

J: Oh, is that right? Now I need to be more like you? That sure would help matters, wouldn't it? Just don't care about things and they will get better.

M: That's not what I said.

J: Every time you don't call, it is just another sign that you don't care about me.

M: You are the most irrational person I have ever met.

J: Oh, whatever.

M: Whatever is right.

J: Fine

M: Fine

Example of Positive Communication

J: Is this a good time for you? I have something important I want to talk to you about.

M: Yeah, I guess this is as good as any time, what's going on?

J: Well, something you did today really made me upset.

M: Okay, tell me what I did.

J: Earlier today, we agreed that you were going to call me at 4 p.m. Is that your recollection?

M: Yes, it is.

J: When I was sitting there at 4:15 and I still hadn't heard from you, I began to get angry. By the time 4:30 rolled around, I was ready to kill you.

M: Sounds like you were really upset with me.

J: I was – this type of behavior really hurts me and ultimately it hurts our relationship.

M: So, you're really feeling like I dropped the ball.

J: Well, I depend on you to keep your word. When that word isn't kept, I lose faith in you. Sometimes, it is difficult to be in a relationship with somebody I don't feel like I can trust.

M: So, you don't feel as close to me when I let you down like that.

J: I guess that's what it amounts to.

M: Even though I don't like to hear it, I understand what you're saying and I am sorry to hurt you like that. I was in a meeting that went way over schedule. I should have gotten up anyway, but I just didn't. I didn't think this would have made you so mad.

J: Apology accepted, but in the future, please don't make promises you can't keep.

M: Got it.