20/20 COMMUNICATION

Clarity of vision, clarity of connection

We look, but we don't always see clearly: the mind interprets faster than we notice. And communication is as much listening as speaking. These ten principles are a practice, not a rulebook. Notice them in yourself first.

1	**TELL THE TRUTH**	Be accurate. Describe what someone did rather than labelling who they are. "You took that" rather than "You're a thief." Go easy on sweeping adjectives.
2	**OWN YOUR FEELINGS**	Take responsibility for your inner state. "I felt hurt when..." rather than "You made me feel..." Others can affect us; our feelings are still ours to understand.
3	**SPEAK FOR YOURSELF**	Each of us experiences the world differently. Use "I" rather than "you". Make personal statements about your own experience.
4	**BE PRECISE**	Stay in the moment. "Always" and "never" are rarely true and often wound. "I saw you wash up once last week" rather than "You never wash up."
5	**LISTEN AND ASK**	Don't assume. Ask what people think, feel and want, then check what you heard. "What did you hear me say?" rather than "I told you!"
6	**SAY WHAT YOU SEE**	Separate what happened from your interpretation of it. "You haven't replied since Tuesday" rather than "You're ignoring me."
7	**SAY HOW YOU FEEL**	Be willing to be vulnerable. Follow "I feel" with an actual feeling: sad, angry, tired, confused. "I feel that..." and "I feel like..." usually introduce a thought.
8	**SAY WHAT YOU NEED**	Look beneath the strategy to the human need it serves. **PHYSICAL** food, water, shelter, rest, sleep, safety, sexual expression **EMOTIONAL** love, cooperation, connection, acceptance, trust, warmth **MENTAL** challenge, celebration, understanding, growth, participation, mourning, honesty, play, humour, beauty, inspiration, order, choice, freedom
9	**ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT**	Make clear, positive requests rather than demands. If you'd be angry at a "no", it was a demand.
10	**EMPATHISE**	Remember we're all doing our best, ourselves included. Respect others, and be as patient with their mistakes as you'd want them to be with yours.

With gratitude to Marshall B. Rosenberg, whose *Nonviolent Communication* underpins principles 6–9; to D. David Bourland Jr. and Robert Anton Wilson for E-Prime; and to Darren Deojee for his work on language. Free to share in full with this credit. © Tim Ruth.

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