

Using A.R.E. Skills for Effective Communication

Objective

To apply A.R.E. skills to reduce conflict and enhance your communication skills.

What to Know

A.R.E. (Acknowledge, Reflect, Engage) skills are essential for effective communication and conflict resolution. You will better navigate challenging conversations, foster understanding, and identify solutions if you consistently apply A.R.E. skills when engaging with others. Here are additional details about each skill.

Acknowledge involves recognizing and validating the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of both yourself and the other person. It includes showing empathy and demonstrating that you understand and value their point of view. Acknowledgment does not imply agreement but rather creates a foundation of respect and openness for effective communication. When you acknowledge others, you engage in:

- **active listening**, where you give your full attention to the other person, maintain eye contact, and use verbal and non-verbal cues to show you are engaged and attentive.
- **validation**, where you acknowledge the other person's emotions and perspectives by expressing understanding and empathy. Use phrases like, "I can see why you feel that way," or "It sounds like this is important to you."

Reflection involves examining and understanding your own thoughts, emotions, and biases, as well as considering the underlying motivations and concerns of the other person. It encourages introspection and self-awareness, enabling you to communicate more effectively and respond thoughtfully.

- **Self-Reflection** allows you to assess your own thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Consider any biases or preconceived notions you might have and how they might influence your communication.
- **Empathic Perspective-Taking** involves putting yourself in the other person's shoes and trying to understand their emotions, needs, and concerns. Consider the underlying motivations and values that might be driving their perspective.

Engage refers to actively participating in a constructive and respectful dialogue to address conflicts, find common ground, and seek mutually beneficial solutions. It focuses on effective communication techniques and collaboration.

- **Open and Honest Communication** is an essential element in engagement. Express your thoughts and feelings clearly and respectfully, using "I" statements to avoid blame or accusation. Encourage the other person to do the same, creating a safe space for open dialogue.

- **Problem-Solving and Collaboration** allows you to explore potential solutions together, seeking compromises or alternatives that meet the needs of both parties. Brainstorm ideas and be open to creative problem-solving approaches.

By applying the A.R.E. skills, you can foster healthier and more productive communication, leading to improved understanding, resolution of conflicts, and stronger relationships. These skills promote empathy, self-awareness, and effective listening, allowing you to engage in meaningful conversations and work toward mutually satisfactory outcomes.

What to Do

In this worksheet, you will practice applying the A.R.E. skills to various scenarios. Read each scenario carefully and answer the questions that follow by utilizing the A.R.E. skills. Remember to be thoughtful and considerate in your responses and aim for effective communication and conflict resolution.

Scenario #1 You are having a disagreement with your friend about how to spend your free time. Your friend wants to go to a party, but you prefer to stay home and relax.

1. Acknowledge

a) How would you acknowledge your friend's perspective on going to the party?

b) How would you acknowledge your own preference for staying home?

2. Reflect

a) What emotions might be present for your friend in wanting to go to the party?

b) What emotions might you be experiencing in wanting to stay home?

3. Engage

a) How could you engage in an open and honest discussion with your friend about the differing preferences?

b) What compromises or alternatives could you propose to find a solution that satisfies both of you?

Scenario #2 You are part of a team at work, and there is a disagreement about how to approach a project. Some team members want to take a more conservative approach, while others advocate for a more innovative and risk-taking approach.

1. Acknowledge

a) How would you acknowledge the perspectives of both the conservative and innovative team members?

b) How would you acknowledge your own thoughts and opinions?

2. Reflect

a) What underlying concerns might the conservative team members have about the innovative approach?

b) What underlying concerns might the innovative team members have about the conservative approach?

3. Engage

a) How could you facilitate a constructive discussion between the team members to understand each other's viewpoints?

b) What strategies could you suggest to discover a middle ground or blend the conservative and innovative approaches?

Scenario #3 You and your partner are having an argument about household chores. Your partner feels overwhelmed and believes you are not contributing enough.

1. Acknowledge

a) How would you acknowledge your partner's feelings of being overwhelmed?

b) How would you acknowledge your own contributions and potential areas for improvement?

2. Reflect

a) What emotions might your partner be experiencing due to feeling overwhelmed?

b) What emotions might arise within yourself during this discussion?

3. Engage

a) How could you engage in active listening to better understand your partner's perspective?

b) What actions or compromises could you propose to address the workload and alleviate your partner's stress?

Take a moment to reflect on the importance of the A.R.E. skills in improving relationships and resolving conflicts. Write down a situation from your own life and then apply the A.R.E. skills.

1. What can you do to acknowledge your own preferences and the other person's perspective?

2. What emotions are you experiencing in this situation? The other person?

3. How can you engage in active listening in this situation?

4. What actions, solutions, or compromises might you propose?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
