



SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND  
WELLBEING OF THE ARMED  
FORCES COMMUNITY AND  
CIVILIAN FAMILIES IN  
CORNWALL



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## *Positive Communication and Connections*

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Effective communication is challenging at the best of times and the current pandemic has created additional difficulties. We are grappling with, talking through masks, keeping a 2-metre distance, and communicating via technology. We are also coping with the uncertainty of not knowing; what we can/should be doing, when life will be normal and what the 'new normal' may require of us. However, this is not uncharted territory. The world has experienced pandemics before and we survived as a race due to our capacity to think positively, adapt and be resilient.

Humans need to communicate and feel connected. So how can we best equip ourselves going forward? How can we best communicate during the Covid 19 pandemic?

1. Stick to the rules – give people their 2-meter personal space. During normal times, it should be 1-meter personal space and so we are just increasing it by 1 meter.
2. Wear a mask when going into shops. This protects both yourself and others, including vulnerable people.
3. Choose wisely when considering going to pubs/restaurants/gatherings. Where there are more people, there could be a higher risk of infection.
4. Keep in touch with loved ones and friends. Do this face-to-face, if possible, as **loneliness** is the world's biggest mental health killer.
5. During these times, think creatively about what you can achieve both for yourself and others. Think of lockdown as an opportunity to be constructive.
6. Concentrate on positives and use your strengths to engage in hobbies and activities to occupy your time productively. Get things done and learn new skills.
7. Connect with yourself by meditating. Over time this will provide you with a 'place of peace' whenever you feel overwhelmed.
8. Build 'places of sanity' in the community so that people feel supported. Work on the premise, "We will get through this together".
9. Have a sense of humour. Laughter and fun are great medicines. Seek the smiles in yourself and others.

### **Active Constructive Communication**

Responding in an active and positive way to someone who is communicating good news will result in stronger relationships. There are four styles of responding:

Scenario - Someone says: "Hey, I have just landed this amazing project". You can respond with.

- Active constructive – "Fantastic, tell us about it. What's involved?"
- Passive constructive – "Oh, great".
- Passive destructive - "I watched this funny video the other day....Lets have a look".

- Active Destructive – “So how are you ever going to find the time? You are involved in so much”.

## **Character Strengths, Personal Beliefs and Communication**

You can use your character strengths to respond in an active, constructive way. For example, if one of your strengths is bravery, you could initiate conversations with people you don't know.

(You can identify your top character strengths by doing the free online questionnaire called VIA Character Strengths in the [authentichappiness.org](http://authentichappiness.org) website. Do this in one sitting, because the system does not save information. Then print off all 24 strengths. You can then authenticate your top 3-5 strengths with friends, family, self, and coach. Use these strengths as much as possible and in different ways to flourish – experiencing high wellbeing.)

## **Different Communication Styles**

- Passive – sends the message “You probably won't listen to me, will you?” it stems from the belief – You are OK, I am not OK.
- Assertive – sends the message “I can trust you, you can trust me, so I am being honest and clear”. This stems from the belief - I am OK, you are OK.
- Aggressive – sends out the message “I think people will take advantage of me, if they detect a weakness”. This stems from the belief – I am OK, you are not OK.

There are underlying beliefs/reasons for the style we use. Often, we adopt our mother's communication style, although this is not always true. We can learn to be trustful and honest in our communications. The challenge is to ensure the tone, body language, pace and language is appropriate for the situation to get one's needs met. The “I trust you” style is the assertive style which is valued here, and has the following attributes:

The steps of assertive communication to aid relationship resilience.

- State your situation and needs clearly
- Use a tone, language and pace which communicates trust, understanding, attention and action
- Describe the situation accurately and objectively
- Communicating concerns, asking the other person for their perspective
- Moving towards an acceptable change/compromise
- Summarise the benefits from the discussion

Surround yourself with positive relationships, if possible, and have the ability to identify 'toxic' ones and minimise or exclude them. This is particularly difficult when involved in a 'toxic' relationship but understanding the relationship dynamics and your role within them can offer options for trying new approaches.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### **Partner Compatibility** - Is she/he the right one for me?

The following is a compatibility list of areas you can use when searching for a suitable partner. Physical attraction, including personality, is important but compatibility and **character** is associated with longevity in the relationship.

There are 10 compatibility styles. It is not expected that we should be compatible with our partner in all styles, but we should aim for over 60 percent as a rough guide. Also, there may be one specific area which is a 'deal breaker'. In this case the style is deemed essential and the relationship won't work without it. These styles are:

1. Physical style – attraction, diet, fitness, personal hygiene, wellbeing.
2. Emotional style – romantic and affection, how he/she treats you, how he/she shows feelings, how he/she perceives the relationship.
3. Social style – personality traits, does he/she communicate easily with others, including friends and family.
4. Intellectual style – educational background, approach to growth, culture, environment.
5. Sexual style – attitude, skill and ability to enjoy.
6. Communication style – articulate, easy to approach.
7. Professional/financial style – attitude to work, money success, blend with family.
8. Open to Growth – self-development, open to change, prepared to work on the relationship.
9. Spiritual style – belief in a higher power, spiritual practice, attitude to life, values.
10. Interests and hobbies – creative strengths, music, etc.

**FATAL FLAWS** (With the appropriate support and willingness to change, some of these flaws do not have to be fatal.)

- Addictions – to involve yourself with someone with an addiction, is incredibly challenging and in most cases fraught with stress and unhappiness.
- Anger – we all feel angry sometimes, and there is nothing wrong with this, if it is channelled in THE RIGHT WAY. If not, the anger is in control. This is abnormal, inappropriate, and damaging. Hence, some animal rights organisations do not always use aggressive means to get their message across, but also use softer options, like demonstrations.
- Self-centred 'victimisation', that is, 'It is always someone else's fault'.
- Control freak – someone who wants to control you and others. This is often accumulative over time. Personal boundaries are pushed and pushed until they are breached.
- Sexual dysfunction – includes sex addiction, sexual dysfunction – this area does not have to be fatal if your partner can get the correct support and are willing to change their behaviour.
- Hasn't grown up – perhaps financially irresponsible, not reliable, immature, and parenting them spoils the relationship.
- Not open with emotions – this is not a relationship; it's an existence.
- Still being plagued by past relationships – the more someone's heart is crowded with anger for a past relationship, the less space there is for love in the present one.

- Emotional trauma from childhood – your partner’s preparedness to confront their mental programming and to change, will reduce the effects of a fatal flaw.

### Qualities to look for in a partner:

- Personal growth commitment – they will be more open to change.
- Open to emotions – will be able to express love, joy and emotions honestly.
- Integrity - will value honesty and there will be trust in the relationship.
- Mature and responsible – breeds respect and the relationship will flourish.
- High self-esteem – your partner is proud of themselves, of you, and the relationship.
- Positive attitude – breeds resilience & grit, and success, as these people don’t give up. Setbacks in life are likely to be overcome with a positive attitude.

In summary, for a relationship to work, 3 things are needed: chemistry, compatibility, and commitment. When there is commitment, more energy is channelled into the relationship, as there is ownership. Like the difference between renting and owning a car or house. Ask the question: “Does this relationship feel right”? Perhaps the most important quality of all is **CHARACTER**, this lies below the surface of personality. What are your partner’s character-strengths and do you recognise each other’s character strengths? Getting to know our partners is a life-long experience. Some of the guidelines above may hopefully assist you in this venture.

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