

COMMUNICATION AGREEMENT

Following these communication disciplines will go a long way toward avoiding and resolving conflicts in community with others (**Matthew 18:15-18; Ephesians 4:29**). We strongly encourage all CES Fellowships to adopt them.

1. *Take responsibility for your own feelings, and for communicating them appropriately.* Do not expect others to read your mind, your body language, or your subtle hints. Use “I” statements about your feelings and do not speak for others. Refrain from blaming others for how you feel. Say “I feel angry,” not “You made me angry.”
2. *Communicate directly with the person or persons involved in an issue.* Do not work through go-betweens or serve as a go-between for others. If someone asks you for information about an issue in which you are not directly involved, direct him or her to the proper source.
3. *Do not speak critically about others behind their backs unless you voice the same criticisms to their faces.* To avoid unhelpful speculation, give specific names when you make a critical comment in a meeting. Trying not to hurt someone’s feelings often causes even more hurt feelings in the long run.
4. *State your position or concern before asking how others feel about it.* Do not set someone up to give a “wrong” answer. Be courageous and put yourself on the spot first.
5. *Practice active listening.* Listen silently and with your whole self until the speaker has finished speaking. Then restate what the speaker has said and wait for a confirmation before responding with your perspective.
6. *Provide continual feedback.* Do not allow resentments to build up, and do not forget to give positive strokes as much as you can.
7. *Respect and validate others’ feelings.* If you do not agree or do not support another’s statement, acknowledge what has been said, then make your point. Don’t give tacit agreement if you do not agree, and express your disagreement respectfully and lovingly.
8. *Use humor softly, not sharply.* Don’t use humor to mask your true feelings, or to relieve tension when others share theirs.
9. *Honor requests for confidentiality unless they involve critical or destructive judgments of other people.* In that case, encourage the person who would take you into his confidence to go directly to the person of whom he is speaking negatively. If he refuses, then tell him that you will tell the person yourself, and try to bring peace and reconciliation between them. If you are not willing to get involved to that extent, then decline to be taken into such illicit confidentiality.