

# Positive Communication

## **Seek to understand before being understood:**

You might've heard about Stephen R. Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" (Free Press, New York, NY: 1989).

The name of his fifth habit is: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

Whenever you find yourself inside the communication process, Covey suggests to always convey the following words to the person you are communicating with:

"Please allow me to listen to you first, I understand what you are saying is ..."

In other words: "Listen with the intent to understand."

John Gottman is an expert on marital relationships. Other relationships can seem like a bad marriage if we do not manage them. Gottman offers the following:

## **Soften your startup**

Discussions end on the same note on which they start. If the start of the conversation is harsh, it will most likely have a harsh ending.

- ✓ **Complain but don't blame** - Blaming is not a productive approach. When complaining about a situation, you are not attacking the other person's personality or character.
- ✓ **Make statements that start with "I" instead of "You"** - When starting the sentence with "you", people usually will go on the defensive.
- ✓ **Describe what is happening, don't evaluate or judge** - This will help prevent the person from feeling attacked and waging a defense rather than considering your point.
- ✓ **Be clear** - Don't expect the other person to be a mind reader. Instead of saying, "Would you take care of the paperwork for once?" say, "Please complete the discharge form before faxing the documentation."
- ✓ **Be polite** - add phrases like "please" and "I would appreciate it if..."
- ✓ **Be appreciative** - Say thank you. Notice the positive parts of the interaction and point them out.