

# Communicate versus Talk

Tara Solomon-Smith - Family and Community Wellness Agent  
March 2024

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

Southwind District

Like many aspects of life, I tend to opt for the path of least resistance when it comes to sharing information. I realize this approach is not the best way to connect with others and build quality relationships.

I did some research on effective communication beyond just conversation. The following tips are based on the insights of applied communications professor, Julien Mirivel and journalist, Charles Duhigg.



- **Greet to create connection**

When initiating contact with someone, whether face-to-face or through email, it's essential to begin with a friendly greeting. Just imagine someone approaching you without a greeting and immediately asking for what they need or want. Unfortunately, this is a common occurrence in our digital communication and at times in our in person professional relationships. Take some time to say hi and chat with people. If you do this often, you'll make stronger connections with those around you and grow your circle of friends.

- **Ask more questions**

People who are really good at talking with others ask lots of questions. These questions can be simple ones like asking if something went as planned or what happened next.

While deep dive questions may seem too personal, especially with someone you don't know well, it doesn't have to be. It's okay if you ask deeper questions in a thoughtful way. For example, instead of just asking about someone's job, you can ask if they like what they do.

When in doubt, try asking "why." People usually like talking about why they think the way they do. Asking "why" a few times can help you understand someone better and see where they're coming from.

- **Reveal to deepen relationship**

The closeness we feel to others is something we do, not something we hold on to. To accomplish this we provide open, honest, and genuine information about how we think and feel. It can be as simple as verbalizing gratitude for someone.

- **Listen to understand**

Learning to be a better listener is a big step, but experts say it's a key quality in good leaders. Active listening lets you connect with others despite differences.

To listen better, stay open to others' views, have empathy, and do not judge. Give people your full attention by leaning in and being physically open. Even if listening feels hard, there's a lot to gain by focusing on others instead of ourselves.

For more information, contact Tara Solomon-Smith, [tsolomon@ksu.edu](mailto:tsolomon@ksu.edu), or call 620-244-3826.