

Personal Communication Toolkit

Small, ready-to-use ways to notice, name, and communicate what helps us participate in relationships and community.

Sometimes we know what we need but struggle to say it—especially when we're overwhelmed, exhausted, surprised, or worried about disappointing someone. These needs of ours can serve as prompts to help us form cue cards, which we can personalize and practice utilizing.

On one side of each card, we have a question or sentence starter. On the other side, we can write our own responses. There are no right answers, and our answers can change. We can add new cards, rewrite old ones, or leave some blank until we're ready.

Over time, our cue card box can become a personal toolkit for communicating our needs, boundaries, preferences, and capacity.

CUE CARDS FOR: CONSENT & BOUNDARIES

- ☐ Before someone touches or hugs me, I want them to...
- ☐ When someone gives me advice, I prefer...
- ☐ Before someone asks me a personal question, I appreciate...
- ☐ Before someone offers feedback, I want...
- ☐ I'm comfortable with...
- ☐ I'm not comfortable with...
- ☐ I'm not available for...
- ☐ I'm only available for...
- ☐ Something I need people to ask me first about is...
- ☐ A "no" from me might sound or look like...
- ☐ If I change my mind, I want people to...
- ☐ When I set a limit, it helps when people...
- ☐ One boundary I want to practice communicating is...
- ☐ Other:

CUE CARDS FOR: MY NEEDS & CAPACITY

- ☐ I connect best when...
- ☐ I usually don't do well when...
- ☐ Today, I don't have capacity for...
- ☐ Today I only have the capacity to focus on...
- ☐ Right now, I'm only able to think about or work on...
- ☐ Something I need more of right now is...
- ☐ Something I need less of right now is...
- ☐ I usually need space when...
- ☐ When I'm overwhelmed, I may...
- ☐ If I seem quiet, it might mean...
- ☐ If I step away, it might mean...
- ☐ Something that helps me feel grounded is...
- ☐ Something that helps me participate is...
- ☐ I find it easier to communicate when...
- ☐ One need I have trouble asking for is...
- ☐ Other:

CUE CARDS FOR: HOW TO SUPPORT ME

- ☐ I feel cared for when...
- ☐ I feel respected when...
- ☐ I feel safer when...
- ☐ I feel included when...
- ☐ When I'm having a hard time, it helps when people...
- ☐ When I'm having a hard time, please don't...
- ☐ If you aren't sure what I need, you can...
- ☐ A helpful way to check in with me is...
- ☐ A helpful question to ask me is...
- ☐ One thing people sometimes misunderstand about me is...
- ☐ Something I wish people knew about how to support me is...
- ☐ When I say I need space, I hope you understand...
- ☐ When I say or do _____, it's not rejection—it's redirection toward _____.
- ☐ Other:

CUE CARDS FOR: PRIVACY & PERSONAL INFORMATION

- ☐ My needs around privacy are...
- ☐ I'm comfortable sharing...
- ☐ I prefer to keep _____ private.
- ☐ If you're curious about something personal, I prefer...
- ☐ Something being private doesn't necessarily mean...
- ☐ I decide who gets to know _____ about me.
- ☐ If I don't answer a personal question, I want people to...
- ☐ I may need time before I'm ready to talk about...
- ☐ Privacy helps me...
- ☐ I want people to understand that not answering a question can mean...
- ☐ A privacy boundary I'd like to practice is...
- ☐ I want people to understand that not answering a question can mean...
- ☐ Other:

CUE CARDS FOR: FEEDBACK & LISTENING

- ☐ When I'm sharing something difficult, I usually want...
- ☐ Before giving me feedback, please...
- ☐ I like feedback that...
- ☐ I don't find it helpful when feedback...
- ☐ Right now, I want someone to listen without...
- ☐ Right now, I'm open to questions about...
- ☐ Right now, I'm open to ideas about...
- ☐ Right now, I'm open to practical help with...
- ☐ I'm not looking for solutions right now. What would help is...
- ☐ If you disagree with me, I prefer...
- ☐ If something I've done has affected you, I want you to...
- ☐ I receive difficult feedback best when...
- ☐ After I share something vulnerable, I appreciate...
- ☐ Other:

CUE CARDS FOR: WORDS I CAN USE

- ☐ Can you ask me before you _____?
- ☐ I'm not comfortable with that.
- ☐ No, thank you.
- ☐ I'm not sure yet.
- ☐ I need some time before I answer.
- ☐ I can talk about _____, but not _____.
- ☐ I have capacity for _____, but I don't have capacity for _____.
- ☐ I can help for _____ minutes.
- ☐ I'd like you to listen, but I'm not looking for advice.
- ☐ Could you ask me that another way?
- ☐ I need a break.
- ☐ That doesn't work for me. What might work is _____.
- ☐ My answer is no, but I'm open to _____ instead.
- ☐ Other:

CUE CARDS FOR: RESPONDING TO OTHERS

- ☐ Thank you for telling me. I understand a little more what your experience has been like.
- ☐ Would you like me to just listen, or would you like a response?
- ☐ Would questions be helpful right now?
- ☐ Would you like ideas, practical help, encouragement, or just some company?
- ☐ I don't know what to say, but I'm glad you told me.
- ☐ I want to make sure I understood you. Did I get that right?
- ☐ I can help with _____, but I can't help with _____.
- ☐ I care about what you're sharing, even if I am unable to respond at this moment.
- ☐ Thank you for letting me know your boundary, I can respect that.
- ☐ I need some time to think about what you've shared.
- ☐ I want to give this the attention it deserves. Can we come back to it?
- ☐ I may not fully understand your experience, but I want to listen.
- ☐ I believe you.
- ☐ Other:

KEEP BUILDING YOUR TOOLKIT

The cue cards in this toolkit are only a starting place. Think about relationships, places, and situations in your own life. Where do you have a hard time finding the words you need?

What other kinds of cue cards do you need? I could use cue cards for...

Think of one specific situation or relationship in your life where communication feels hard.

The situation:

What I want the other person to understand:

What I need, want, or want to protect:

Cue cards I could use:
