

Communicating in Stressful Situations

Three Main Types of Communication

- Passive
- Aggressive
- Effective / Appropriate / Direct

Main Differences Between Communication Types

- Eye contact
- Tone of voice
- Body language
- How it makes the listener feel

	Passive	Aggressive	Effective
Eye contact	Avoidant	Penetrating	Direct
Tone of voice	Timid	Forceful, loud	Calm
Body language	Reserved, withered	Tall, open	Neutral
How listener feels	Easy to avoid this person	Defensive; listener is less likely to help	Respected; listener is most likely to help

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Use "I" Statements

The best way to communicate directly is to use "I" statements.

Offer three pieces of information:

- how you feel
- the situation that made you feel that way
- and how the staff can best help you

Be Direct, Be Brief

Try to be **direct**, keep it **short**,
state exactly how you **feel** and how the staff can **help**.

Remember, your friends and family are trying to help support you,
so it is important for you to tell them what is **helpful** and what is not.

"I feel _____ when _____ happens. Can you _____?"
(Emotion) (Event) (Action/Request)

Examples:

1. "I feel **confused** when you give me lots of information at once.
Can you please **explain it to me again**?"
2. "I feel **worried** about holding my baby.
Can you please **help me hold them**?"
3. "I feel **frustrated** when you take control of everything.
Can you please **include me in your decision-making process**?"

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Pick your timing

- **Try when things aren't too busy**

The NICU is a busy place. The nurses and doctors are often taking care of many things. Try not to approach them when things are chaotic. Instead, try to approach them once things calm down a bit.

- **Ask first**

When you do approach staff, ask them if now is a good time to talk. If it is not a good time for them, check when would be a good time by asking, "Should I come back in ten minutes or when will you have time later on?"

- **Give yourself a break**

It's hard to communicate well if you are feeling stressed or upset. Give yourself some time and space to breathe before you try to communicate.

- **When calm**

Your partner and/or family might be feeling just as stressed as you, so try to talk about the things you need when they are calm too.

- **Write it down**

If it is not a good time to talk, write your questions down so that you won't forget.

