

Self Disclosure

Showing the 'human' side of yourself in a non-defensive way, with a view to helping others get to know you and building trust in the relationship.

Desired outcomes

The other person trusts you enough to be open with you in return.

- ◇ You are able to 'feel freer' as opposed to guarded in your relationships with others.
- ◇ In sharing some of your vulnerability with others you get their support and understanding.
- ◇ Your working relationship strengthens as the trust between you builds.

Appropriate when

- ◇ The level of trust in the relationship is lower than it might be.
- ◇ You feel misunderstood by someone, and want them to understand you better.
- ◇ You need the help and support of others.
- ◇ You are stuck and don't know how to proceed.
- ◇ The relationship is new and / or you don't know the other person very well.

Critical elements

- ◇ The content and the degree of self-disclosure must be relevant to:
 - the situation
 - the nature of the relationship you have with the person
 - how well you already know them
- ◇ Openness in a relationship builds over time. Big disclosures too early on can either leave you too vulnerable or can leave the other person confused about what you expect of them.
- ◇ Over time self-disclosure tend to move from 'safe' information (work-oriented, task focused, e.g. the thinking behind decisions) to the more 'risky' (personal feelings about situations, admitting 'not being super human').

Example phrases

Depends very much on the content of the self-disclosure.

'I need your help'

'I've made a mistake', 'I misjudged the situation'

'I feel stuck here and am not sure what to do next'

'It might help you to know my thinking behind this decision'

Non-verbal backup

- ◇ The tone of voice is genuinely open and is not defensive, you are not apologising, simply giving information.
- ◇ Hold eye 'soft' contact with the other person.

What can go wrong?

Too little, and people may see you as secretive...



Too much, and people may see your openness as being inappropriate...

...AND THIS IS MY DOG SPOT

