

11 Rules For Respect And Open Communication In Relationships

1. If you have a problem with me, come to me privately.
2. If I have a problem with you, I'll come to you privately.
3. If someone has a problem with me and comes to you, send them to me. I'll do the same for you.
4. If someone consistently talks to you about me but will not come to me, say to the person, "Let's go see him/her together. I am sure he/she will see us about this." I will do the same for you.
5. Because it is easy to misinterpret intentions, be careful how you interpret me. On matters that are unclear, do not feel pressure to guess about my thoughts, feelings, actions, or intentions. Instead, come to me and ask me to clarify. I will do the same for you.
6. If it's confidential, don't tell. If you or anyone else comes to me in confidence, I won't tell unless (a) the person is going to hurt himself/herself, (b) the person is going to physically harm someone else, (c) a child has been physically or sexually abused. I expect the same from you.
7. I do not manipulate. I will not be manipulated. Do not let others manipulate you. Do not let others try to manipulate me through you. I won't let others manipulate you through me.
8. I will never send you an *unsigned* letter as a way to "share concerns" or to criticize you or anyone else. Conversely, I do not read *unsigned*, critical letters; rather, I throw them away. Sending an unsigned critical letter and including statements such as, "I'm writing to you in love" is not loving. It is hurtful, cowardly, and a violation of healthy relationship principles.
9. When you have a question or are in doubt about something, come to me and ask to talk with me about it. If I can answer you without misrepresenting something or breaking a confidence, I will. However, even in times when I can't share information to the degree you would like me to, please give me the benefit of the doubt instead of assuming negative things about me. I'll do the same for you.
10. Let's keep the "air" between us clear. If I sense that there is distance, hurt, misunderstanding, etc. between us (regardless of who is to blame), I'll come to you to talk about it. I expect the same from you.
11. Forbearance and forgiveness are essential for our relationship.

Adapted from Charles W. Christian, "10 Rules for Respect." *Leadership Journal*, Summer 1999, www.christianitytoday.com as quoted in Maxwell, J.C. (2003), *There's no such thing as "business" ethics*, Warner Business Books.

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