

**Can you cultivate close connections by how you respond to good news?**



“The key is to keep company only with people who uplift you, whose presence calls forth your best.”

EPICETUS

## ACTIVE CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONDING

Active and constructive responding (ACR) refers to one of four ways in which we respond to good news; it is part of a theoretical framework proposed by psychologist Shelly Gable. Active and constructive responding is the most effective way to respond, giving both the deliverer of good news and the listener a positive outcome. (The other three ways include passive and constructive, active and destructive, and passive and destructive.)

Huh? What does that mean?

How do you react to a friend when they share good news? Imagine your partner comes home from work and announces that she received a promotion at work. There are many ways in which you could respond to this news. An ACR responder might say, "That's amazing, honey! I knew they would recognize your hard work. Let's grab a bottle of champagne and celebrate. I'd love to hear more about your new position." When people share good news, they want you to share in their joy. And this goes far beyond just a pat on the back. Conveying authentic interest, pride, and even curiosity in someone's good news are all hallmarks of ACR.

ACR takes practice. The other three typical forms of response include a passive and constructive reaction. One might say, "That's good news." This response includes positive feedback but does not include an active, elaborative component. An active and destructive responder may say, "I never get to see you as it is. If you take this promotion, you're going to be at the office at all hours of the night and even more stressed than you are now." Although you have actively elaborated in response to the news, the content is destructive. Then there is the least effective response which is passive and destructive – "Okay. Are you ready for dinner?" This response is passive and contains no positive, affirming information. Essentially, it's a blow off to the good news.

Keep in mind that active and constructive responding extends to nonverbal communication. An active and constructive response includes eye contact and smiles, while an active and destructive response features frowning or glares. Both types of passive response include little or no emotional expression. A passive and destructive response may also include a lack of eye contact or leaving the room.

How do I use this in my life?

ACR helps develop and maintain strong personal relationships. If you retrain yourself to offer active and constructive responses to the people in your life, you will find yourself feeling more positive as well as receiving positive feedback from others. When your child tells you that she made the soccer team, resist the urge to complain about how much more driving that will mean for you or how much her gear will cost. Resist the urge to just say, "I'm proud of you." Instead, congratulate her with specific statements of praise. For example, you might say, "That's great news! You practiced so hard over the summer, and now it's paying off. I can't wait to see you play in your first game. Tell me more about it!"

Breaking the habit of making passive or destructive responses can be difficult. To begin, try to make only active and constructive responses for one full day. Over time, it will become natural to respond actively and constructively to others' good news. Remember to make eye contact, smile, and use affirmative nonverbal communication. By making these positive responses, you will make others feel good and will feel genuinely excited about their successes.

Source;<https://gostrengths.com/what-is-active-and-constructive-responding/>

# ACTIVE CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONDING

How might I use Active Constructive Responding?

Use the Active Constructive Responding technique wherever appropriate over the coming weeks. An active constructive response is essentially responding to other's good news with enthusiasm, energy and engagement.

There are four ways of responding to people. Active Constructive Responding has been shown to build relationships best.

	CONSTRUCTIVE	DESTRUCTIVE
ACTIVE	<p>Display enthusiasm, excitement, ask interested questions, reinforce positives, keep the conversation going, eye contact, smiling.</p> <p>“That must feel fantastic”            “What happened next?”            “What is your plan?”            “How are you going to celebrate” “I will make sure there is an announcement”</p>	<p>Talk about the negative, devils advocate, find a problem, frown, look worried.</p> <p>“I can't wait to see them argue over that!”            “I have no idea where we are going to find the resources for that!”            “That's a lot extra to be taking on” “I bet (someone else) will be upset”</p>
PASSIVE	<p>Smile, acknowledge, reassure, silence, no expression.</p> <p>“That's great”</p>	<p>Disinterest, diversion, avoidance, no expression, little eye contact, turning away.</p> <p>“Did you finish... (something else)?”            “I had a call from... (someone unrelated)”</p>

An active, constructive response is not about overdoing praise and positive feedback, as that can make people feel uncomfortable or patronised. We can concentrate on asking questions which encourage the person to talk about their good news and savour their positive emotions.

## **ACTIVE CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONDING**

### **EXAMPLE of Active Constructive Responding;**

**Suppose that a very good friend gets a promotion at work. Potential responding could be:**

- **Active Constructive Response.** “That is really great. I am so proud of you. I know how important that promotion was to you. How do you want to celebrate?”
- **Active Destructive Response.** “That sounds like a lot of responsibility to take on. There will probably be more stress involved in the new position and potentially longer hours at the office.”
- **Passive Constructive Response.** “That’s good news.”
- **Passive Destructive Response.** “What are we doing Friday night?”

**Your task is to carefully listen to people you care about. When they report good events to you, respond actively and constructively to the good news reported.**

### **Research**

The manner in which we respond when others share triumphs directly builds or undermines relationships. Research into couples and intimate relationships suggests that supporting a partner when good things occur is as important in building a relationship as supporting them when bad things happen.

Research suggests that using Active Constructive Responding is a good way to convey understanding, validation and caring. It can increase the wellbeing of your existing friends and teammates, as well as help you make new connections and encourage closer, more trusting relationships.

What this technique, which was observed and codified by Shelly Gable, highlights is that giving enthusiastic and attentive feedback is very important in building positive relationships.

### **Advice**

Humans like talking about themselves, and this makes up about 40% of communication. A large part of this dialogue is also about good news. Make a mental note to be on the lookout for people’s good news and use their good fortune to build stronger bonds

*Adapted from Active Constructive Responding by Dr Aaron Jarden and the Langley Group.*