

COMMUNICATION



Purpose

To teach adults the importance of effective communication. They will gain knowledge and skills that reinforce the importance of open and honest communication as a family strength that empowers individuals and families.

Objectives

Participants will:

- acquire knowledge and skills necessary for effective communication.
- learn ways to improve communication with family members and others.
- become aware of good and bad communication techniques.
- learn the importance of effective communication in strengthening families.

Materials Needed

- Copies of Handouts
- Overhead Transparencies (OPTIONAL)
- Overhead Projector (OPTIONAL)

Handouts

This lesson includes a variety of handouts that will enhance communication knowledge and skills. Pick and choose handouts that are appropriate for the audience.

- A Television Family
- Communicating with “Body Language”
- Communicating with Your Posture and Gestures
- 8 Good Family Communication Practices
- 6 Key Communication Skills
- Active Listening
- “I” Message
- Communication Blockers
- My Plan for “Talking and Listening to My Child”
- Communication at Home Ideas for Parents/Guardians
- Characteristics of Families Who Communicate
- Involve the Whole Family
- Communicating Effectively with Your Spouse
- Communicating with Older Family Members
- Choosing the Best Words with Your Children
- Talking with Your Children about Tough Subjects
- The Four W’s of Talking with Your Child
- Parents/Guardians are You Listening?
- 10 Tips for Improved Communication with Children

Advance Preparation

1. Read Background Information for this lesson.
2. Review and choose Handouts for this lesson.
3. Secure necessary materials for the lesson as described.
4. Review and select Overhead Transparencies. (OPTIONAL)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Communication is a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings. Communication is much more than just the exchange of words. It is what we say, how we say it, why we say it, when we say it, and what we neglect to say. It is our facial expressions, our gestures, our posture, and our vocal tones. Communication includes both verbal and nonverbal language. Words are the basic tools of verbal language. However, nonverbal language includes posture and body position, facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures and mannerisms and behavior and actions. Communication is the energy that fuels the caring, giving, sharing, and affirming among family members. Without genuine listening and sharing of ourselves, we cannot know one another.

One of the characteristics of a strong family is the ability to communicate. A healthy family responds to feelings as well as to words. Much of communication is nonverbal. This includes such action as touching, smiling, etc.; doing good things for another; and taking time/making time for another. The most destructive nonverbal communication is silence. Silence can mean disinterest, hostility, anger, boredom or extreme pain.

Effective communication patterns require sufficient time to evolve. Spending time together on a regular basis helps assure this. Strong families have learned to communicate directly and to use consistent verbal and nonverbal behavior in speaking and listening. Experts say all families are communicating verbally and non-verbally almost continually, and the quality of their communicating process is vitally important if they want to live together.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

According to research, there are **8 Good Family Communication Practices** that strengthens families.

1. Children are able to see good communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal, modeled in the family.
2. The family controls the use of television - not allowing it to interfere with family communication time.
3. The family listens and responds to each other.
4. The family recognizes nonverbal messages.
5. The family encourages individual feelings and independent thinking.
6. The family recognizes turn off words and put-down phrases.
7. The family develops a pattern of reconciliation.
8. The family keeps interruptions to a minimum.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

There are **6 Key Communication Skills**, which family members should develop to strengthen and improve communication. They are:

- **Listening** - demonstrating concern for all aspects of the speaker's message.
- **Rephrasing** - leading to better understanding of the basic message in fewer words than spoken by the speaker.
- **Probing** - using questions or statement to direct the speaker's attention inward to examine his or her situation, feelings, thoughts or problems in more depth.
- **Positive Speaking** - demonstrating, through words, the positive aspects of the relationship.
- **Reflection of Feelings** - mirroring back the spoken or unspoken feelings of the person speaking.
- **Self Disclosure** - sharing a part of yourself that has meaning for the relationship.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Perhaps the most important communication skill is listening. Active listening is essential to effective communication and is vital to hearing and being heard. In active listening, judgement is suspended and the listener uses empathy to try to understand the speaker's experience, feelings and point of view. The six key principles of active listening are to:

1. **ENCOURAGE** – Draw the other person out.
2. **CLARIFY** – Ask questions to confirm what the person has said.
3. **RESTATE** – Repeat in your own words what the person has said.
4. **REFLECT** - In your own words, tell the person what you think they are experiencing.
5. **SUMMARIZE** – Reiterate the major ideas, themes, and feelings expressed.
6. **VALIDATE** – Show appreciation for the person's efforts to communicate.

“I” MESSAGE

“I” messages allow you to tell people you want them to change their behavior, without blaming them or putting them down. “I” messages create a positive atmosphere for communication and problem solving. There are three main parts to an “I” message:

1. **“I FEEL** (State the feeling)
2. **WHEN YOU** (State the other person's behavior)
3. **I WANT”** (State what you want to happen)

COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS

Communication blockers can stop communication dead in its tracks. Learning to avoid these blockers can clear the path to making your thoughts and feelings understood. Also, communication blockers tend to come in clusters. Once one is used, the others follow. Some communication blockers are:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| * Interrupting | * Ignoring | * Sarcasm | * Insulting/Name-Calling |
| * Globalizing | * Judging | * Accusing | * Stating Opinion as Fact |
| * Blaming | * Expecting Mind-Reading | | |

COMMUNICATION

OVERVIEW

Strong families communicate easily and well – frequently, openly, clearly, and directly. They do a good deal of sharing - their feelings, hopes, dreams, fears, joys, sorrows, experiences, growth, and needs. **Strong families believe in open and honest COMMUNICATION.** It is important to understand and value **ALL** family members involved in the conversation. Here are some age-appropriate tips for preschool, elementary, middle/junior high, senior high and adults.



PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Communication with preschool children is critical within the family unit. Of the four language arts - listening, speaking, reading, and writing, LISTENING is the first to be learned and is used more than the other three skills combined.



ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

Good listening skills play a crucial role in the learning process of young children. These skills help children successfully acquire, process, and communicate information. Children in this age group often pattern their communication habits after those they see modeled in their life.



MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH ADOLESCENTS

Young people in this age group are on the threshold of adolescence full of new people and new situations. So, it is important that they understand that their ability to be understood clearly by others and understand others in return depends on good communication skills.



SENIOR HIGH TEENS

Teenagers who have good communication skills will be better able to deal with interpersonal problems and build positive relationships. Verbal and nonverbal communication is used among teenagers. Therefore, it is critical that attention is given to body language and tone of voice when communicating.



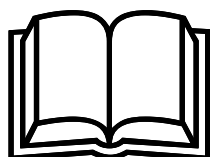
ADULTS

Adults need to show through modeling how to improve communication skills within the family and in other relationships. Children can flourish in a family where people are not afraid to show their feelings and where they know others want to listen. Adults can help by expressing themselves openly and by listening carefully to others.

COMMUNICATION



LESSON HANDOUTS



- ✎ **8 Good Family Communication Practices**
- ✎ **6 Key Communication Skills**
- ✎ **Active Listening**
- ✎ **“I” Message**
- ✎ **Communication Blockers**
- ✎ **Communicating with “Body Language”**
- ✎ **Communicating with Your Posture and Gestures**
- ✎ **A Television Family**
- ✎ **My Plan for “Talking and Listening to My Child”**
- ✎ **Communication at Home Ideas for Parents/Guardians**
- ✎ **Characteristics of Families Who Communicate**
- ✎ **Involve the Whole Family**
- ✎ **Communicating Effectively with Your Spouse**
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- ✎ **Parents/Guardians are You Listening?**
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COMMUNICATION



8 GOOD FAMILY COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

- Children are able to see good communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal, existing between their parents
- The family controls the use of television
- Family members listen and respond to each other
- Individuals recognize nonverbal messages
- The family encourages individual feelings and independent thinking
- The family recognizes and keeps to a minimum turn off words and put down phrases
- The family keeps interruptions to a minimum
- The family develops a pattern of reconciliation

COMMUNICATION



6 KEY COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Here are some communication skills, which family members should develop or strengthen to improve their ability to communicate in a positive manner.

- 1) **Listening:** demonstrating concern for all aspects of the speaker's message.
- 2) **Rephrasing:** restating the basic message in fewer words than the speaker.
- 3) **Probing:** using questions or statements to direct the speaker's attention inward to examine his or her situation, feeling, thoughts or problems in more depth.
- 4) **Positive Speaking:** demonstrating, through words, the positive aspect of a relationship.
- 5) **Reflection of Feelings:** mirroring back the spoken or unspoken feelings of the person speaking.
- 6) **Self - Disclosure:** sharing a part of yourself that has meaning for the relationship. It helps share feelings, thoughts and experiences.

COMMUNICATION



ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is essential to effective communication. In active listening, judgement is suspended and the listener uses empathy to try to understand the speaker's experience, feelings, and point of view. Practice these principles of active listening.

◆ ENCOURAGE

Draw the other person out. Use verbal and nonverbal cues to show that you are listening.

◆ CLARIFY

Ask questions to confirm what the speaker has said. Not only will this help you understand, but it also may help the speaker examine his or her own perceptions.

◆ RESTATE

Repeat in your words what the speaker has said. This shows you are listening and helps check for facts and meaning.

◆ REFLECT

In your own words, tell the speaker what you think he or she is experiencing. This can lead the speaker to be more expressive. It also provides a way to check the accuracy of your perceptions.

◆ SUMMARIZE

Reiterate the major ideals, themes, and feelings the speaker has expressed. This provides review and a basis from which to continue the dialogue.

◆ VALIDATE

Show appreciation for the speaker's effort; acknowledge the value of talking; affirm your positive feelings about being part of the dialogue.

COMMUNICATION



“I” MESSAGE

“I” messages allow you to tell people you want them to change their behavior without blaming them or putting them down. “I” messages create a positive atmosphere for communication and problem solving.

There are three main parts to an “I” message:

- I FEEL**
(State the feeling) *I feel hurt and angry . . .*
- WHEN YOU**
(State the other person’s behavior) *When you tell other people something I told you in confidence.*
- I WANT**
(State what you want to happen) *I want you to promise that when I tell you something private, you won’t tell.*

TIPS

- ⇒ You don’t always have to use the order shown above. Sometimes you can start with “When you . . .”
- ⇒ Sometimes it’s not necessary to use the “I want . . .” part of the message. Just saying how you feel may be enough.
- ⇒ You don’t have to use the exact wording of “I feel . . . when you . . . I want,” as long as you express your feelings clearly without going on the attack.
- ⇒ A pitfall to avoid: Don’t disguise an accusation or an insult as an “I” message.
- ⇒ “I” messages do not have to be negative. You can send positive “I” messages.

COMMUNICATION



COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS

☞ **Interrupting**

Interruption cuts people off before they're finished speaking and telling their side.

☞ **Ignoring**

Ignoring is simply not paying attention or hogging the conversation floor, focusing on one's own agenda, and disregarding the other person's contribution.

☞ **Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is a real communication killer and poisons the atmosphere.

☞ **Accusing**

Accusations are counter-productive. The accused party usually becomes angry and defensive.

☞ **Insulting/Name-Calling/Threatening**

These are aggressive personal attacks that raise hostility and interfere with communication.

☞ **Globalizing**

Globalizing is generalizing about a person's behavior: "You *always* do this" or "You *never* do that." Global statements are hardly ever accurate, and they make people angry and defensive.

☞ **Judging**

Judging is when someone assumes the right to decide if others are right or wrong, good or bad.

☞ **Blaming**

Blamers assume that if there's a problem or conflict, somebody must be to blame. They're quick to say, "It wasn't my fault--it was yours!"

☞ **Stating Opinion As Fact**

It can be infuriating to hear someone state an opinion as if it were the absolute truth. It is vital to allow others to express opinions that contradict one's own.

☞ **Expecting Mind-Reading**

It is easy and common for people to assume that their thoughts and feelings are visible to others. But we must communicate our thoughts and feelings.

COMMUNICATION



CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES WHO COMMUNICATE

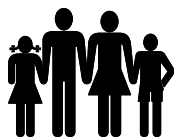
- ❖ They spend lots of time talking.
- ❖ They share feelings, joys, sorrows, hopes, dreams, frustrations, etc.
- ❖ They state clearly their individual needs and wants.
- ❖ They waste little time or energy fault finding.
- ❖ They face conflict honestly and openly.
- ❖ They resolve problems by respectful “win-win” negotiations.
- ❖ They show appreciation for each family member’s feelings and ideas.
- ❖ They develop the roles of speaker and listener.
- ❖ They communicate verbally and non-verbally in complicated, but understandable ways.
- ❖ They recognize what is being “said” through action.
- ❖ They communicate directly.
- ❖ They are consistent in their behaviors and expectations.

The result is family members who know things are “right” within the family unit and there is “wellness” in the family for all members.

COMMUNICATION



INVOLVE THE WHOLE FAMILY



Positive communication skills will help maintain strong family relationships.

◆ **Work Together**

Good communication takes time and teamwork. It's a process in which the whole family should become involved. One of the first strategies to build and strengthen your family communications is to avoid letting aggravations accumulate.

◆ **Be Honest, But Not Accusatory**

It's easy to blame others when you're angry or hurt. But blaming only invites retaliation. Talk about feelings instead. For instance, avoid saying, "You ruined the plans again. You're always late." Redirect the emphasis by saying, "I'm very disappointed that you were late; I was counting on you to be home to meet the plumber." This approach is less likely to provoke a defensive response and more likely to encourage an open discussion.

◆ **When You Argue, Do So Constructively**

Arguments all too often turn into mud-slinging events. Stick to the point and avoid dragging out old quarrels. Try to maintain a positive approach. If you have a legitimate concern, focus on it. Resist the temptation to bicker about things that have no bearing on the issue at hand. Also, be willing to give a little bit--to compromise.

◆ **Put Yourself In The Other Person's Shoes**

Don't lose sight of the other person's perspective; value another's point of view. Listen and acknowledge the other person's concerns, then discuss why you perceive the situation differently. Encourage that person to explain his or her feelings and make assurances that you want to understand his or her perspective. Then make an honest attempt to really listen.

◆ **Accept Feelings: Don't Judge Them**

Even if something seems ridiculous to you, it may be of genuine concern to the other party. Feelings are real, so take them seriously. In the area where you have problems, work together to pinpoint the trouble spots and implement changes to correct them.

Taking notes at a family meeting can help build teamwork and keep everyone focused.

COMMUNICATION



COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR SPOUSE



Here are some tips to help you more effectively communicate what you want from your spouse and help you give your spouse what he or she needs.

Find A Good Time

First, find a good time to approach your mate. Right when he or she walks in the door, after being in traffic for an hour, may not be the most receptive time. When you do find a good time to discuss your needs:

- ◆ Try to maintain a positive, progressive attitude.
- ◆ Sit on the couch together, instead of on opposite sides of the kitchen table.
- ◆ Try touching your spouse's arm or knee, or holding hands.
- ◆ Use a firm but gentle tone of voice in stating what you need, why you need it, and what you want your mate to do.

Stick To The Point

When you begin your discussing, avoid rambling on about everything else but the precise problem at hand. Do not bring up issues that are not related to the present concern.

After you have presented your request, be sure to give your spouse a chance to answer by listening attentively to any concerns he or she may have. Address those concerns directly and honestly, and try not to elevate your needs above your spouse's. Show that you see things from his or her perspective, but that you are stuck and need help. Ask directly for suggestions on how to correct the situation. Involve each other in the problem-solving process, emphasizing that, ultimately, you share a common goal.

You're Both Unique

Remember to approach each other from a position of equality. You both bring unique things to your relationship, and by identifying and valuing your differences, you can learn to work better together. At times each of you will perceive gaps in your relationship, or find that your respective responsibilities are too much to handle. When this happens, how and what you communicate to your spouse will determine how effectively you solve your problems.

COMMUNICATION



COMMUNICATING WITH OLDER FAMILY MEMBERS

► Physical Changes

Two of the most common changes that occur in the process of growing older are loss in sight and hearing. You and your family will be able to continue a fine and normal relationship with your older family members if you are aware of how to help if these changes take place.

► Hearing Loss

A gradual loss of hearing affects many older adults and can affect their knowledge of what is going on around them at home and in the world at large. This may affect their regular conversation with you and others, as well as their actual safety.

► Reduced Sight

Changes in the ability to see may be gradual, but can also occur rapidly. If so, the effect on communication is great, and your understanding will be important. Since most persons use their eyes as a primary means of gaining information, the loss of sight may change the way they act.

► Social Changes

Some results of the physical problems of hearing or sight loss may be that the older adult begins to avoid people and the need to hear or see. It is a great challenge to help prevent that from occurring. You can let them know how much you care about their ideas, their advice, and their company by taking the time and effort to keep the communication channels open.

TIPS

- ◆ Ask the older person if speaking louder or slower helps them understand you better.
- ◆ Choose a quiet place to talk.
- ◆ Speak directly to them.
- ◆ Assist them in getting a hearing aid, if necessary.
- ◆ Try to make everything more visible for them.
- ◆ Make sure their prescription for eyeglasses is up-to-date.
- ◆ Use large print or recorded materials.

COMMUNICATION



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR POSTURE AND GESTURES



The way we stand, sit, or greet another person conveys subtle messages about our expectations and attitudes. Ideally, your stance should convey assertive self-confidence and not give passive or aggressive signals. Check these aspects of your interactions with others. What impression might they make?

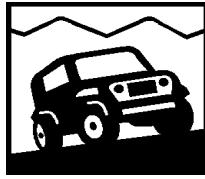
Personal distance, how close you stand or sit to someone you're talking to, often reflects cultural standards. Some people, for instance, have a relatively close personal distance and have been known to back others around a room as they converse. What is your personal distance? How do you feel when someone gets too close? When someone stays more distant?

♣ Posture and Gestures ♣ (Passive, Assertive, or Aggressive)

Certain posture or gestures can communicate passive, assertive, or aggressive signals. How would you classify the following body signals based upon your perception of body language?

Posture / Gesture	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Touch someone lightly as you speak	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standing with fist on hips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standing with arms folded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shifting from one foot to the other while standing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leaning back while sitting with hands behind head	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leaning forward while sitting with hands together, elbows on knees or table	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leaning forward while sitting, but with hands together at fingertips forming a "steeple"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMUNICATION



COMMUNICATING WITH “BODY LANGUAGE”



Words are only part of communication. We also communicate in the way we sit or stand, use our hands, or our facial expressions. Take a look at the following body “messages.” What would you be trying to say if you used these movements?

DOING THIS

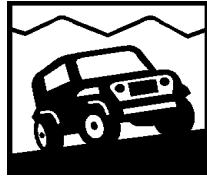
Clenched jaw
Eyebrows raised
Fidgety movements
Clenched fists
Crossed Arms
Fixed smile
Wrinkled brow
Hands open, palms out
Hands quietly in lap
Head tilted
Shoulder shrugging
Slumping posture
Wringing hands
Hands on hips

MIGHT MEAN THIS

Anger, stress
Surprise, curiosity
Nervousness

- **How does your “body language” reinforce what you are trying to communicate?**
- **When you listen to a person, what clues can you pick up from their “body language?”**

COMMUNICATION



CHOOSING THE BEST WORDS WITH YOUR CHILDREN



As a parent/guardian you have probably encountered situations with your children that have been tiring and perhaps have confused them. Here are some suggestions for positive, neutral ways to relate to your children in these situations.

*** Be Neutral, Not Negative**

Young people are particularly sensitive about the way they express themselves--through their dress, their taste in music, and their friends. Picture your daughter coming home one afternoon wearing lots of makeup and seven earrings, and blasting the latest heavy metal tunes. You may choose to respond, "You look ridiculous! And turn that horrible noise off." While the observation may be true, the response is negative and judgmental. It's condemning her individuality. Instead, you might just want to acknowledge what's going on, but in doing so give the responsibility back to the child. For instance, a parent could ask in a calm tone, "What does it mean to wear seven earrings?" or "What do people say when they see you?" The idea is to choose words and an attitude that encourages the child to evaluate her behavior herself, not provoke a defensive response.

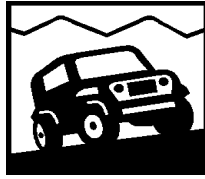
*** Give Them Consequences**

An effective way to express your feelings is to outline the real life consequences, which will result from your children's behavior. Sometimes it's only the consequences that will get through to children. For example, if your son likes to bite, instead of scolding him repeatedly to no avail, you could say, "Biting is not accepted, and if you continue to bite people, other kids will be afraid of you and not want to be with you." This is a matter of fact approach, and it helps a child make the decision to continue or stop the behavior.

*** Know When You Need Help**

If the behavior is not interfering with your children's ability to be successful, or if it doesn't really harm anyone, let it go. It might be helpful to ask yourself why it's important to you. The limits of acceptable behavior will vary from family to family and parent to parent according to individual value systems.

COMMUNICATION



TALKING WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT TOUGH SUBJECTS

♥ Young Children

Your children learn by observing, imitating, and asking questions. These questions may be annoying after a while, or you might feel embarrassed because you don't know all the answers, or they may be asking about things you don't want them to know yet. But who do you want to be their teacher--about morals, about love, about sex? Answering their questions makes you the person they come to. Today if your child asks, "why is the sky blue?" and they discover that you listen and take the time to answer, then they will come to you later with questions like, "why shouldn't I take drugs?" Encourage questioning, help them to form their questions if they seem confused, and give them simple answers.

♥ Adolescents

Talking with adolescents does not have to be uncomfortable and difficult. In fact, relating to your teenagers about sex, drugs, alcohol, or other tough subjects can be a productive and bonding experience between you and your child.

✍ Be Direct and Honest

Unfortunately, there is no magic age when you begin "real life" discussions with your teenage children. Each child will be different depending on his or her environment, maturity, and goals. By this time, you are probably pretty adept at reading your children and picking up on their cues. They may be too embarrassed or afraid to ask you specific questions about sex, drugs, or alcohol, but they need to know about these things, and they need to know that you feel such issues are important. Be careful to approach them like you would any other subject--don't make these talks different.

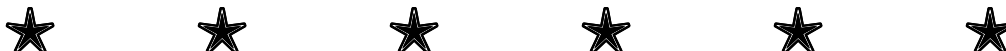
✍ Give Accurate Information

A very positive and non-threatening way to approach tough topics is to ask your child what they know. You can then begin discussing the subject together without appearing as if you're interrogating them. Try to emphasize how important correct information is and reinforce your faith and trust in their judgement. Discuss real life consequences and make sure they understand them. Work with them to anticipate peer pressure situations and figure out what words and phrases to use in order for them to be accepted, yet maintain their individuality.

COMMUNICATION



THE FOUR W'S OF TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD



1. **WHY** is it important to talk with your child?

When you talk with children, it helps them learn about things around them and about what you think and feel. They learn to talk by listening to you. Talking with each other helps parents/guardians and children understand and enjoy each other.

2. **WHAT** do you talk to your child about?

You can talk with your child about things your children are interested in. You can talk about hobbies, interest, and schoolwork. You can talk about what's happening in the child's life at the moment. The list of things to talk about is only limited by the parent's imagination. Very young children can name and describe the things they see. They can describe how things work. The most valuable communication usually comes from spontaneous sharing by you and your child. Parents have to be prepared to take advantage of this time for meaningful and quality communication.

3. **WHERE** is the best place to talk with your child?

The best place is usually where you are at the time. Adults sometimes wait to find the best place and miss out on many good opportunities to talk with their child. The place can be working on a project at home, while doing the dishes, while the child plays with his/her favorite toy, washing the car, during meals, or while taking a walk or drive together. Talking before bedtime is an excellent way to end a child's day and say that you are interested in what's happened to them.

4. **WHEN** is the best time to talk with your child?

It's never too early to talk to a child; even tiny babies respond to a parent's loving words. The best time is the time you find to spend with your child and are able to give him/her your full attention. The amount of time is not nearly as important as the quality of time spent. Busy parents can have meaningful "talk time" if they are aware of the need to take the time available to them.

COMMUNICATION



COMMUNICATION AT HOME *IDEAS FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS*

SHARE A MEMORY

Have your child share a fond memory of the family (a family outing or vacation).

REMEMBER WHEN

Look at family photos. Pictures can remind you of many special times.

LET'S TAKE A WALK

Take a walk or drive with your child. Talk about what you both see and hear.

FAMILY BULLETIN BOARD

Have a family bulletin board in your kitchen, family room, or hallway to display achievements, talents, messages, snapshots, etc.

LET'S PLAY A GAME

Let your child choose his/her favorite game to play with you. During the game, make it a point to listen carefully to your child.

T.V. FAMILIES

Watch a television program together that features a family. After the program, talk about how the family communicated.

YOU AND ME TIME

Make an appointment with your child for a certain time. Use the time to really listen to what's going on with the child.

TAKE NOTE

Take time to write your child a note to give encouraging words.

THE LAST 15

Take 15 minutes before your child goes to bed and talk about the day.

COMMUNICATION



PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE YOU LISTENING?

When you use these seven suggestions, you are sending your children a clear message that they are important enough for you to lay aside your own perceptions and truly understand who they are.

♥ **MAKE THE TIME**

If you are too busy to talk, say so; otherwise, your impatience and distraction will leak through dampening your child's desire to talk to you. Good communication takes time.

♥ **BE ATTENTIVE**

Give it your all. Shut the door, put down the newspaper, turn off the water, and move away from the sink. Let your nonverbal cues tell your child you are available.

♥ **QUESTIONS**

Don't always take your child's questions and comments at face value. Sometimes children speak of hidden fears and ask for reassurance indirectly with questions.

♥ **CUES**

Look for nonverbal cues. You can't always count on the spoken word. It's nonverbal behavior such as, the hunched back or curled lip that puts your child's words into context.

♥ **BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER**

Active listening helps you acknowledge your children's feelings in a way that encourages them to say more about themselves.

♥ **DON'T JUMP**

Try not to jump in with words or advice until the end of the conversation. Sometimes, to talk out feelings and have someone listen is all your child really wants or needs. Once a child feels heard and understood, the original problem may shrink into manageable perspective or even disappear.

♥ **SHOW RESPECT**

Listen with respect to your children. Children's concerns are different from ours. Never laugh unless your child is laughing. Give your child the freedom to express feelings without fear of ridicule or judgement.

COMMUNICATION



10 TIPS FOR IMPROVED COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN



1. Teach your children to listen. Gently touch your child before you talk. Say his/her name.
2. Speak in a quiet voice. Whisper sometimes so children have to listen - they like this.
3. Look a child in the eyes so you can tell when you are understood. Bend or sit down. Become the child's size.
4. Practice listening and talking. Talk with your family about what you see on T.V., hear on the radio, or see at the store.
5. Respect children and use a courteous tone of voice. Talk to children in a tone so they will seek you as a confidant.
6. Catch children and teens being good. Praise them for cooperating with you or their siblings, for doing those little things that are so easy to take for granted.
7. Use door openers that invite children to say more about an incident or their feelings. "Tell them more."
8. Praise builds a child's confidences and reinforces communication. Unkind words tear children down and teach them that they just aren't good enough.
9. Children are never too old to be told they are loved. So, say "I love you."
10. Give your individual attention when your child wants to talk to you. Don't read, watch T.V., fall asleep, or make yourself busy with other tasks.

COMMUNICATION



MY PLAN FOR “TALKING AND LISTENING TO MY CHILD”



The following are behaviors I have used in the past in “talking with and listening to my child.”

- _____ Not paying attention
- _____ Interrupting my child when he/she talks
- _____ Never take my child seriously
- _____ Use mainly closed ended questions
- _____ Do not look for verbal and nonverbal cues from my child
- _____ Do not respect my child’s opinions
- _____ Usually stifle the conversation by being preoccupied
- _____ Don’t take time to really listen
- _____ I usually do most of the talking



Now I am trying to build good communication skills with my child. This week, I have done the following:

- Rank accordingly:**
- 1. None of the time**
 - 2. Part of the time**
 - 3. Most of the time**

- _____ Made time to talk with my child
- _____ Was attentive when my child and I talked
- _____ Used open-ended questions to try to draw my child out
- _____ Looked for verbal and nonverbal cues as my child was talking
- _____ Did not jump in with my own opinions as my child talked
- _____ Showed respect and did not laugh or ridicule my child
- _____ Gently touched my child as he/she talked with me
- _____ Praised my child’s feelings as he/she was talking.
- _____ Found some interesting times to talk to my child

COMMUNICATION



A TELEVISION FAMILY



DIRECTIONS:

As a family, watch a television show together and share answers to the following questions.

1. What is the name of the show?

2. What type of family was the show about?

3. What qualities did you observe about the family?

Positive: _____

Negative: _____

4. Describe the communication between adults and children.

5. Give suggestions as to how the communication could be improved.
