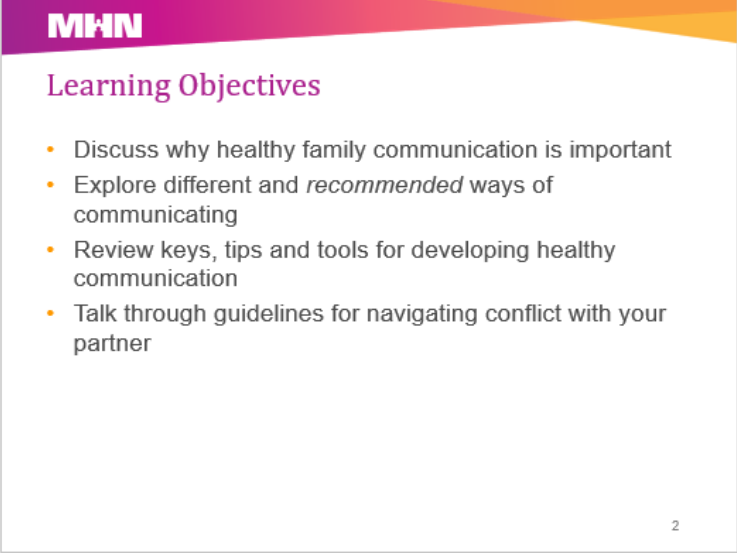

Slide 1



Participant Guide

Slide 2




MHN

Learning Objectives

- Discuss why healthy family communication is important
- Explore different and *recommended* ways of communicating
- Review keys, tips and tools for developing healthy communication
- Talk through guidelines for navigating conflict with your partner

2

Slide 3



MHN

The Importance of Healthy Family Communication

Healthy communication is an:

- important characteristic of strong, healthy families
- essential building block of strong marital, parent-child, and sibling relationships

Why?

3

Slide 4

MHN

The Importance of Healthy Family Communication (cont.)

Communication enables family members to:

- express their needs, wants, and concerns
- express their differences as well as love and admiration
- resolve the unavoidable problems that arise in all families
- develop skills that can be used in other relationships

4

Slide 5

MHN

Poor Communication...

- Yelling
- Silent-treatment or never talking
- Using terms like “always” or “never”
- Blaming
- Swearing, name-calling, or other forms of abusive speech
- Passive-aggressive statements or actions (*passive-aggressive refers to words or actions, which are angry, yet the anger is denied by the person saying or doing them*)
- Keeping and hiding family secrets
- Labeling a person as bad rather than saying the behavior is wrong
- Using ultimatums or threats
- Hurting, abusing or harming another person

5

Slide 6

MHN

Poor Communication Is Ineffective/Harmful

- Can lead to numerous family problems, including excessive family conflict, ineffective problem solving, lack of intimacy, and weak emotional bonding
- Is associated with an increased risk of divorce and marital separation
- Can lead to behavioral problems, at-risk behaviors and depression or anxiety in young people

6

Slide 7

MHN

Different Kinds of Communication

- Instrumental communication
 - the exchange of factual information that enables individuals to fulfill common family functions (e.g., telling a child that he/she will be picked up from school at a specific time and location).
- Affective communication
 - the way individual family members share their emotions with one another (e.g., sadness, anger, joy).

7

Slide 8

MHN

Clear vs. Masked and Direct vs. Indirect Communication

Communication can be *clear* or *masked*

- **Clear** - messages are spoken plainly and the content is easily understood by other family members
- **Masked** - message is muddled or vague

And *direct* or *indirect*

- **Direct** - the person spoken to is the person for whom the message is intended
- **Indirect** - the message is *not* directed to the person for whom it is intended

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Slide 9

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Four Styles of Communication

Clear and Direct	Clear and Indirect	Masked and Direct	Masked and Indirect
Message is clear and directed to the person for whom it is intended.	Message is clear, but it is <i>not</i> directed to the person for whom it is intended.	Message is unclear, but directed to the person for whom it is intended.	Message is unclear and it is <i>not</i> directed to the person for whom it is intended.
Example: a father, disappointed about his son failing to complete his chore, states:			
"Bill (the son), I'm disappointed that you forgot to take out the trash today without my having to remind you."	"It's disappointing when people forget to complete their chores."	"Bill, people just don't work as hard as they used to."	"The youth of today are very lazy."

Slide 10

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Keys to Building Effective Family Communication

- Communicate clearly, directly
- Be respectful (and aware of your tone)
- Communicate frequently
- Be an active listener
- Be positive
- Be thoughtful and specific in giving praise
- Show empathy
- Make distinctions between feelings and actions
- Be a good role model

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Slide 11

MHN

Do's and Don'ts for Improving Communication

Do

- Give clear, age-appropriate directions
- Calmly communicate your feelings
- Be honest; truthful
- Identify *behavior* as a problem, not the child him/herself
- Tune in to what you are communicating non-verbally
- Be aligned with your partner
- Seek counseling if you have ongoing relationship challenges

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Slide 12



Do's and Don'ts for Improving Communication (cont.)

Don't

- Give broad, general instructions
- Name call or blame
- Yell or threaten
- Lie or tell your child half-truths
- Use silence to express strong feelings

12

Slide 13

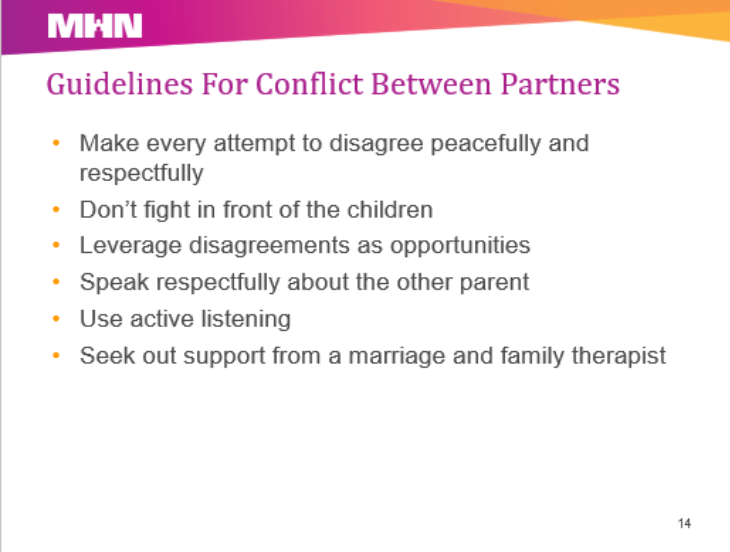


Keeping Your Cool

- Take a few deep breaths very slowly
- Wait 5 minutes before starting to talk to your child
- Try to find a word to label what you are feeling (such as "disappointed"). Say it to yourself and be sure that it is appropriate for you child
- Share your feelings of frustration with your spouse or a friend
- Do not hold grudges. Deal only with the present
- Seek professional help if you feel that you have lost control

13

Slide 14



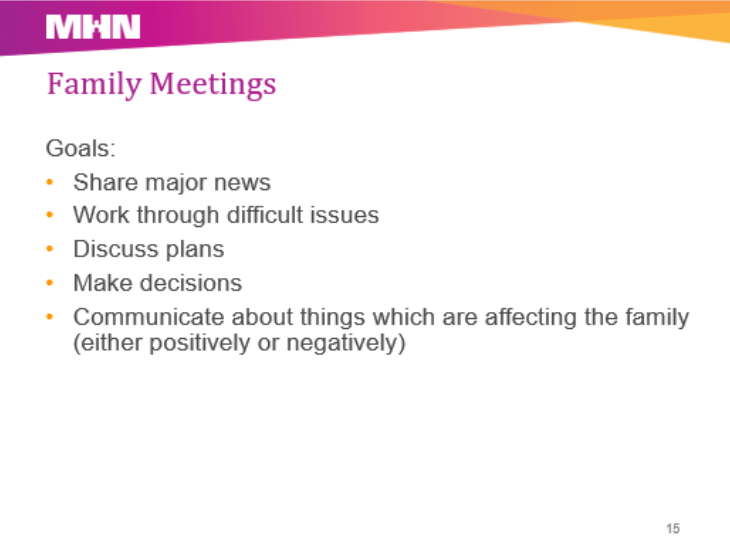
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Guidelines For Conflict Between Partners

- Make every attempt to disagree peacefully and respectfully
- Don't fight in front of the children
- Leverage disagreements as opportunities
- Speak respectfully about the other parent
- Use active listening
- Seek out support from a marriage and family therapist

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Slide 15



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Family Meetings

Goals:

- Share major news
- Work through difficult issues
- Discuss plans
- Make decisions
- Communicate about things which are affecting the family (either positively or negatively)

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Slide 16



MHN

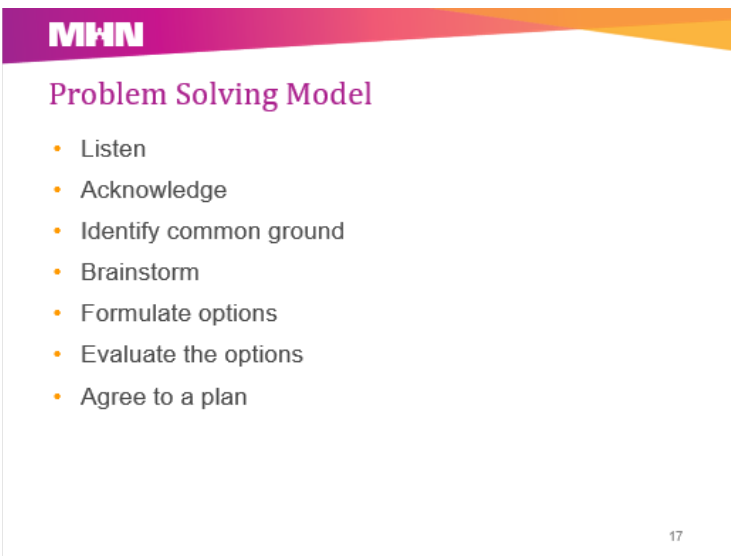
Family Meeting Ground Rules

- Each person gets chance to speak
- No one interrupts the speaker
- No put-downs or name-calling
- Use "I" messages

16

This slide features a purple and orange gradient header with the MHN logo. The title 'Family Meeting Ground Rules' is in purple. The list of rules is in black. The slide number '16' is in the bottom right corner.

Slide 17



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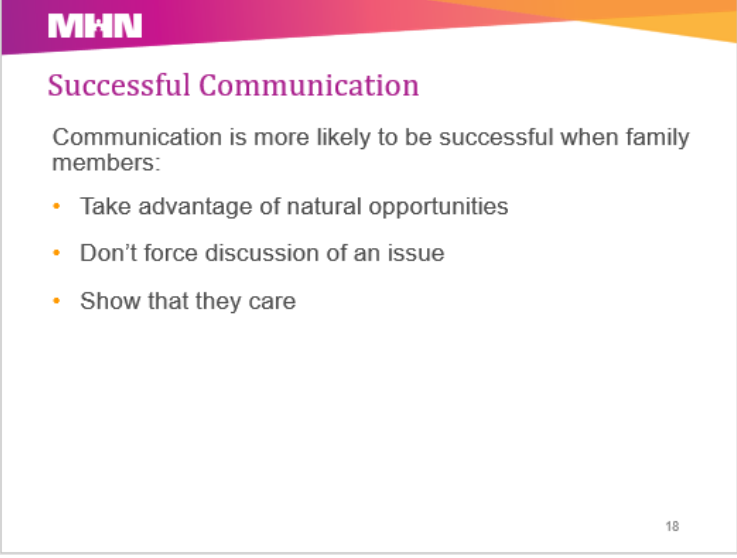
Problem Solving Model

- Listen
- Acknowledge
- Identify common ground
- Brainstorm
- Formulate options
- Evaluate the options
- Agree to a plan

17

This slide features a purple and orange gradient header with the MHN logo. The title 'Problem Solving Model' is in purple. The list of steps is in black. The slide number '17' is in the bottom right corner.

Slide 18



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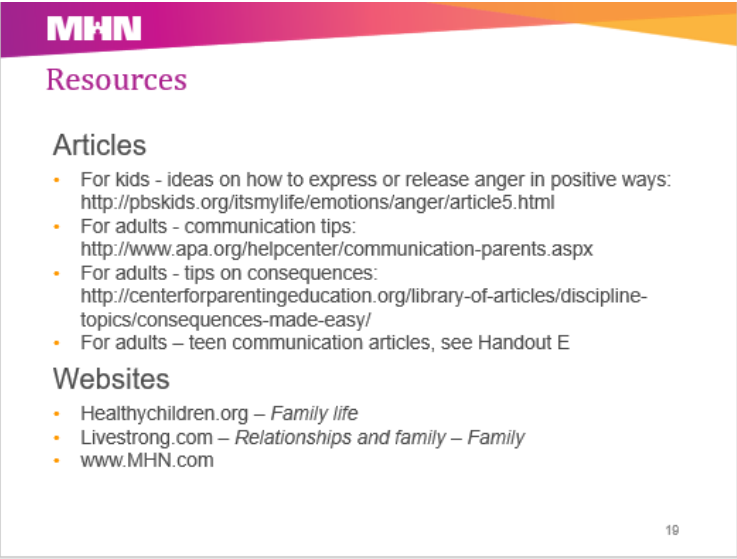
Successful Communication

Communication is more likely to be successful when family members:

- Take advantage of natural opportunities
- Don't force discussion of an issue
- Show that they care

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Slide 19



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Resources

Articles

- For kids - ideas on how to express or release anger in positive ways:
<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/emotions/anger/article5.html>
- For adults - communication tips:
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/communication-parents.aspx>
- For adults - tips on consequences:
<http://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/discipline-topics/consequences-made-easy/>
- For adults – teen communication articles, see Handout E

Websites

- Healthychildren.org – *Family life*
- Livestrong.com – *Relationships and family* – *Family*
- www.MHN.com

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Handout A: Identifying Communication Styles

Clear and direct communication is the healthiest form of communication and occurs when the message is stated plainly and directly to the appropriate family member. An example of this style of communication is when a father, disappointed about his son failing to complete his chore, states, "Bill, I'm disappointed that you forgot to take out the trash today without my having to remind you." The father states clearly what he thinks and feels, leaving little room for ambiguity.

With a **clear and indirect** style of communication, the message is clear, but it is not directed to the person for whom it is intended. Using the previous example, the father might say, "It's disappointing when people forget to complete their chores." In this message the son may not know that his father is referring to him.

Masked and direct communication occurs when the content of the message is unclear, but directed to the appropriate family member. The father in our example may say something like, "Bill, people just don't work as hard as they used to." This often results in confusion and frustration for those on the receiving end.

Masked and indirect communication occurs when both the message and intended recipient are unclear. In unhealthy family relationships, communication tends to be very masked and indirect. An example of this type of communication might be the father stating, "The youth of today are very lazy."

Adapted from: Peterson; Rick. "Families First-Keys to Successful Family Functioning: Communication." May 1, 2009 <https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/350/350-092/350-092.html> July 2, 2016

Activity

Each scenario has 4 different statements (a, b, c, and d). Next to each statement, indicate which style (clear and direct, clear and indirect, masked and direct, or masked and indirect) is being used.

Example:

Scenario #1 Tanya's appointment

Tanya's dad is waiting by the entrance of her high school. It's nearly 3:15 pm and she's nowhere in sight. He had asked her to be there at 3:00 pm. At 3:15 she appears with some friends and casually strolls over to her father's car. Her father says:

- a) "It's so frustrating. Teenagers never respect their parent's requests to be ready on time." (*Clear and indirect*)
- b) "I'm very frustrated right now Tanya. I asked you to be ready at 3:00. It's 3:15 now and we're going to be late for your appointment." (*Clear and direct*)
- c) "Kids don't care about keeping commitments." (*Masked and indirect*)
- d) "Tanya, you clearly don't care about your commitments." (*Masked and direct*)

Scenario #2 Time for Dinner Otis

Seven-year-old Otis is playing with Legos. His mother has asked him repeatedly to wash his hands and come to dinner. He has not responded and she's very frustrated.

- a) "That's it. I'm going out to dinner. No one listens to me around here!"
- b) "Otis, I've asked you three times to wash your hands and I've heard no response from you. You have precisely one minute to be in the bathroom washing your hands or your Legos are off limits tonight."
- c) "Otis, you are so disrespectful!"
- d) "Someone is going to do chores for the remainder of the night if they're not at the table in 3 minutes."

Scenario #3 I expect a clean room!

Marta is leaving her three kids at home with a babysitter. Before leaving she says,

- a) "Johan, I don't want to see a mess in your room when I get home tonight."
- b) "I want all dirty clothes picked up off the floor and put into the hamper."
- c) "I expect to see clean rooms when I get home."
- d) "Johan, I expect you to put all of your blocks into their bin. The dirty clothes on the floor need to go into your hamper and your garbage basket needs to be emptied into the kitchen garbage can."

Scenario #4 Can I go out tonight?

Mark arrived home last night 30 minutes past his curfew. He asks his mother if he can go out tonight. She says:

- a) "Teenagers need to learn their lesson and can't have everything they want."
- b) "No Mark. You missed your curfew by 30 minutes last night. You are grounded until Friday. That means you must come directly home from school each day this week."
- c) "No. People who don't respect the rules have consequences."
- d) "Why Mark, would you ask me that question?"

Note: Ideally the mother and son would have a pre-determined agreement on what the specific consequences are for breaking curfew (back to clear and direct communication).

Scenario #5 Are you sad Mama?

Patrice, age 5 walks into the kitchen and sees her mother sitting at the table crying. "What's wrong mama?" Patrice says. Mom replies, "I just learned that Jose, my best friend when I was a kid, has died." Patrice then asks "Are you sad mama?"

- a) "People have feelings when they lose someone they care about."
- b) "Yes, Patrice. Mama is very sad."
- c) "Patrice, you've been sad before right?"
- d) "Everyone is asking me if I'm sad. I am very sad."

Handout B: Keys and Tips to Building Effective Family Communication

Be respectful

Speak to your child (and your partner) as if they are intelligent and worthy of respect. Rather than saying “*why* would you do that?” in a condescending tone, you might say in a non-accusatory manner, “I don’t understand. What were your thoughts?”

Tone of voice is impactful and can communicate judgment, doubt and criticism. Consider how it affects you when others use a tone that sounds condescending or accusatory. Can it shut you down? Make you angry or ashamed? Notice your tone, and be aware of when you need to ‘tone’ it down.

Communicate frequently

One of the most difficult challenges facing families today is finding time to spend together. According to a recent Wall Street Journal survey, 40% of the respondents stated that lack of time was a greater problem for them than lack of money (Graham & Crossan, 1996).

With busy schedules being a reality, it is difficult to find sufficient time to spend with one another in meaningful conversation. Families need to make time to catch up and talk about what’s going on.

Even 10 minutes a day without distractions for a parent and child to talk can make a big difference in forming good communication habits. It means turning off the television or radio. Give your undivided attention to your child. Sit down and look at your child while you talk. Talk in the car; eat dinner together; schedule informal or formal family meetings to talk about important issues that affect your family; and talk to your children at bedtime. There are many creative ways to make time to communicate with other family members.

Be an active listener

An essential aspect of effective communication is listening to what others are saying. Being an active listener involves trying your best to understand the point of view of the other person. Whether you are listening to a spouse or a child, it is important to pay close attention to their verbal and non-verbal messages. As an active listener, it is important to acknowledge the other person's perspective. For example, when listening to a spouse or child, you can nod your head or say something sincere to acknowledge what they are saying, such as, “wow, that sounds like it was scary” or “so that really hurt your feelings huh?” which conveys to the other person that you care about what he or she has to say. Another aspect of active listening is seeking clarification if you do not understand the other family member. This can be done by simply asking, “What did you mean when you said...?” or “Did I understand you correctly?”

Be positive

While it is often necessary to address problems between family members, or to deal with negative situations, effective communication is primarily positive. Marital and family researchers have discovered that unhappy family relationships are often the result of negative communication patterns (e.g., criticism, contempt, defensiveness). In fact, John Gottman and his colleagues have found that satisfied married couples had five positive interactions to every one negative interaction (Gottman, 1994). Couples who are very dissatisfied with their relationships typically engage in more negative interactions than positive. It is very important for family members to verbally compliment and encourage one another.

- **Look for strengths in your child and opportunities to “stroke” desired behaviors.** It’s very easy to become too focused on negative behaviors, like the fact that not ALL of the blocks were put away in the box. “I see that you put most of the blocks away. Finish up now, by putting away the last two”. Instead of, “why did you not finish putting the blocks away?”
- **State what you want (not what you don’t want).** Instead of “don’t be late” say, “be home by 6:00 pm”. State things positively.
- **Communicate consequences in advance,** so that your child knows what to expect. Think through consequences before you blurt them out, ensuring that the severity level is reasonable for the situation at hand, and something that you would actually follow through on once you state it. If you decide that the situation warrants implementation of a consequence and you communicate it to your child, be sure to follow through on it.

Note: for tips on consequences see- <http://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/discipline-topics/consequences-made-easy/>. Referenced July 7, 2016

Be thoughtful and specific in giving praise

Use statements that deal only with the child’s efforts and accomplishments, not with their character or personality. An example would be saying, “I saw how hard you tried” vs. “you’re such a hard worker”.

Be specific and concrete. An example would be saying, “You must have rehearsed those lines a hundred times!” vs “you worked hard”.

Show empathy

This means tuning in to your child's feelings and letting him know you understand. If your child is sad or upset, a gentle touch or hug may let him know that you understand those sad or bad feelings. Do not tell your child what he thinks or feels. Let him express those feelings. And be sure not to minimize these feelings by saying things like, "It's silly to feel that way," or "You'll understand when you get older." His feelings are real to him and should be respected.

Make distinctions between feelings and actions

Feelings need to be identified and acknowledged; undesirable actions may have to be limited, stopped or redirected. For example, “I hear that you are angry” is a healthy acknowledgment of a child’s emotional state, however allowing them to routinely express their anger by throwing objects across a room or hitting their sibling is not.

Note: for ideas (for kids) on how to express or release anger in positive ways, see- <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/emotions/anger/article5.html>. Referenced: July 9, 2016

Be a good role model

Remember, children learn by example. Use words and tones in your voice that you want your child to use. Make sure that your tone of voice and what you do send the same message. For example, if you laugh when you say, "No, don't do that," the message will be confusing. Be clear in your directions. Once you get the message across, do not wear out your point. If you use words to describe your feelings, it will help your child to learn to do the same. When parents use feeling words, such as, "It feel frustrated when you don't come to the kitchen after I've told you it's time for dinner," instead of screaming or name calling, children learn to do the same.

Some content is adapted from the following:

“Improving Family Communication.” Healthy Communication with Your Child (Copyright © 2003 American Academy of Pediatrics, Updated 9/2003) Last updated November 21, 2015.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Improving-Family-Communications.aspx> July 2, 2016.

“Poor Family Communication.” <http://livingiths.org/resources/at-risk-help/risk-behaviors/poor-family-communication> July, 2 2016

Peterson; Rick. “Families First-Keys to Successful Family Functioning: Communication.” May 1, 2009 <https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/350/350-092/350-092.html> July 2, 2016.

Handout C: Active Listening Skills

An essential aspect of effective communication is ‘actively’ listening to what others are saying. Being an active listener involves trying your best to understand and acknowledge the point of view of the other person. The following are 7 active listening skills:

1. Attending

Listening silently with full attention

2. Non-verbal encouragement

Nodding “uh-huh,”

3. Paraphrasing

Putting into your own words the message you hear. “What I hear you saying is that you felt hurt when they left for the movies without you”.

4. Ask clarifying questions

Drawing out more information to help clarify in an open-ended manner. “Could you say more about that?” or “Did I understand you correctly?”

5. Reflected feelings

Feedback of the feelings underlying the speaker’s words. “You sound angry...sad...fearful.”

6. Pay attention to non-verbal messages

When a spouse or child says something but their facial expressions or body language *say* something else, check in with them. “You said you’re fine with the plan but you’re looking down at the ground. Do you have some doubts about it?”

7. “I” Messages not “You” messages

I message template: I (think/feel) when..... because....

“I feel ignored when you walk by, because I say hello and don’t get a response”.

OR

“I think you’re ignoring me because I say hello when you walk by and there’s no response”.

NOT:

“**You** never say hello. Why are you so rude?”

After the ‘because’ piece, then listen – *really* listen). Finally, if you have a request to make, make it. “Would you acknowledge me when I say hello to you?”

Handout D: Improving Communication

Think of a situation or dynamic in your family that you'd like to try and improve by communicating in a way that is different from how you typically communicate.

What is the situation?

How have you been communicating?

What is working? What is not working?

What result are you hoping for?

How would you like to try communicating differently? What will you say? What do you anticipate by way of response(s)?

Handout E: Teen Communication Articles

5 Secrets for Communicating with Teenagers

Does this sound familiar? Your teenage son is taking forever in the bathroom (again), but you need him to get ready so you can get to work on time. You're thinking, "How could I have raised such an inconsiderate kid? He's so disrespectful!" Meanwhile, your child is locked in the bathroom, consumed with his image in the mirror. He's thinking, "No way am I going to school with this pimple on my nose." Outside in the hallway, you start pounding on the door, yelling at him to hurry up. He screams, "God, you just don't understand! Leave me alone!" When he finally emerges, he gives you the silent treatment. Not only that, he's missed the bus, so you have to drive him to school. You end up late for work and completely overwhelmed, wondering, "Why doesn't my kid listen to me? Does he have to fight me on *everything*?"

Distance and explosiveness are often the only ways your teen knows how to communicate when things get intense—which of course only causes more conflict.

You and your teen: two different worlds, two different perspectives—and a giant disconnect that can make communicating a real mystery. As a therapist and the mother of three teenagers myself, I know firsthand that the more you push your kids, the more they get defensive and dig in their heels; they become reactive in the form of explosiveness or shutting down. And they're thinking, "My parents don't have a clue, so what's the point of trying to explain myself? I'll just tune them out." Clamming up or exploding are both ways your teenagers attempt to manage their stress and defend themselves. That's because distance and explosiveness are often the only ways your teen knows how to communicate when things get intense—which of course only causes more conflict.

Related: Can't get your child to listen to you?

Here are 5 secrets that I've found to be really helpful personally for communicating with kids through the difficult adolescent years.

1. The secret to opening your child's ears: Here's a simple secret that will help you in everything you do with your teen: No matter how hard it might be, try to start all interactions with your child with understanding, even if you don't fully agree or even quite comprehend what they're talking about. Here's an example: Your teenage daughter is not doing her schoolwork, and instead is online with friends chatting. It drives you crazy because you're thinking, "If she fails another test, her average will go down and she'll never get into college. What kind of future will she have?" Your teen, on the other hand is thinking, "I have to get online and talk with Skyler. If we don't make up after the fight we had in the hall today, all the other girls will be against me and I'll have no one to hang out with at school tomorrow." Again, two different worlds. Try to start by saying, "I understand how difficult it is for you when you have a fight with one of your friends. I also know that you need to pass this test tomorrow. Schoolwork is your job and it's your responsibility to do it to the best of your abilities. Let's sit down and think

of a good way you can manage your time tonight.” Be sure not to say “I understand, but...” which will simply disqualify what you’ve just said. Start from a place of understanding, and try to put yourself in your child’s shoes first before telling her what needs to change. I’ve found that doing this tends to “open kids’ ears.” Instead of feeling like they have to defend themselves against you, they actually listen.

2. Take the emotionality out of the equation. Emotion is your enemy when you’re trying to get through to your teen. Remind yourself that what he says and does is not a reflection on you. You may not like how he’s behaving—or even how he’s thinking—but keep your emotions out of it, even if his behavior impacts you. I’m not saying this is an easy thing to do; it’s tough, but it’s a skill you can learn just like any other. In fact, I tell parents to repeat this slogan to themselves before talking to their kids: “This is just like a business transaction; it’s nothing personal.” When you really think about it, there’s no reason to be mad at your child for being himself. He may be making a poor choice, but the truth is, he might not yet have the skill set to make a better one. So your job is to help guide him to better choices so he can in turn develop a better skill set. When you realize what your job is as a parent, it will help you be less emotional. When you feel frustrated, remember, don’t take it personally. Tell yourself that this is simply a problem to solve, and part of “parenting business as usual.”

Related: Learn the secret to getting your child to behave.

3. Ask curious questions...not loaded questions. Ask your teen for his ideas and be collaborative. Let him see that you believe in him and that you’re not mad at him for struggling in his life. When you let him see that you have faith in his abilities and he has the space to work things out on his own, you will begin to develop true confidence in him. Don’t ask loaded questions that put your child on the defensive like, “Why can’t you get up on time? What’s wrong with you?” Instead, try opening a conversation with, “Eli, do you have any ideas for how you might get up on time?” If he says he doesn’t know, offer a few of your own and ask which one would work for him. Let your teen know that his problems are *his* to solve. Don’t step into his “box.” Rather, you are there to help him figure out solutions—and to let him deal with the natural consequences of his behavior.

Your goal is to help your child think for himself, which will in turn help him feel like he has some control over his world. Listen openly to what he says and ask him to think critically about each choice. What will work and what will be problematic about each decision? What would be the natural consequences of each choice—and how would he feel about dealing with that?

4. Don’t be needy; stand on your own two feet. Don’t “need” your teen’s cooperation, validation, or good behavior. As soon as you need something from your child so that you can feel better, you have put yourself in a vulnerable position because he does not have to give it to you. When you need something and don’t get it, you will naturally try harder by controlling and manipulating more. And your teen will become more and more defiant or passively compliant—neither of which is good.

The truth is, you don’t need anyone else to prop you up. You can validate yourself and solve your own problems. So if your child is acting out, that’s his problem. *Your* problem is to decide how you will choose to behave toward him. That’s in your hands, not his. Ask yourself, “How do

I want to act, no matter how he is acting? What can I put up with and what can't I?" Take back your power and say to yourself, "If my child is screaming at me, instead of needing him to stop, I can turn around and walk away and not engage." Let him know you won't talk with him until he can approach you with civility. Here's the truth: when you aren't trying to get your child to change or shape up, you will be able to think of better choices for yourself. And your child will be less defiant because he will have no one to resist. When you're not trying to control him and you're not reacting to him, he will have to wrestle with himself rather than with you.

Related: Trapped in a power struggle with your child?

5. Don't do anything until you're both calm. Another rule of thumb is to avoid doing *anything* until you and your child have both calmed down. The fact is, you don't have to respond to your child when you are upset, or when your child is upset and in your face. You just don't. You can say nothing. You can take a few minutes or more if you need to. When emotions have evened out, you can sit down and talk with him. It's never good to try to bring up a difficult subject or resolve a conflict in the heat of the moment. So if either you or your child is upset, pause and come back when you can address things in a calmer way.

Related: Can't get through to your child?

If you attempt a conversation with your child and he's rude or out of line, that's when you have to hold on to yourself and make sure you don't get dragged into a fight. If your relationship with your child is such that it's impossible to have an open, respectful conversation at this point in time, remember that it's still your job to stay firmly planted. Have a slogan that you say to yourself like, "I'm not going there no matter what." If you can do that consistently, over time the baiting and antagonism should calm down. And don't feel badly if you get pulled back in occasionally—staying strong isn't easy. The good news is that the more you refuse to engage, the easier it will get to stay calm.

Source: Pincus, Debbie MS LMHC. "5 Secrets for Communicating with Teenagers."
<https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/5-secrets-for-communicating-with-teenagers/>. July 10, 2016

How to Communicate with and Listen to Your Teen

Many parents have questions that start with, “*What do I say when...?*” However, parents need to understand that it is “*less important what you say, and more important that you listen.*”

1. **Turn off the “parent alarm.”** Listen without judgment and reaction. When your son says, “*Mom, I met this girl*” and you react by saying, “*You’re too young to date,*” that instinctual alarm prevented you from being able to hold a meaningful discussion on healthy sexuality.
2. **Don’t catastrophize.** When teens come to their parents with concerns, they need a calming, rational presence that will create a safe space for them to figure things out. When parents make it seem worse than they had imagined, they leave more anxious and won’t return.
3. **Don’t over empathize.** Adolescents need a sounding board. Sometimes they exaggerate; sometimes they express fleeting feelings. When you over empathize, it can heighten their emotions and make you look naïve or overly involved. Imagine your empathizing by condemning their friend who your daughter had a fight with. You’ll look “wrong” the next day when your daughter is best friends again with the girl she hated yesterday.

Your Values & Opinions

Teens are happy to hear their parents’ values and opinions, but these opinions should not be shared in a way that feels judgmental or condescending and should try to avoid personal territory that will position a teen to need to become defensive of friends or self.

Avoid “The Lecture”

Parents who lecture are not heard. The lecture is often condescending or hostile, and is delivered with an abstract string of possibilities loosely tied together. Young adolescents are still not thinking abstractly, and all teens who are upset or in crisis mode will not absorb lessons delivered abstractly. Parents may increase their yield if they are able to convey their wisdom in a more concrete manner that adolescents can follow.

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