



Spokane, WA 99203
PO Box 8318
Empowering, Inc.
"Play with a purpose."



Communication

Healthy Communication in the Family

Arguments and misunderstandings. We have all had them with those we love. We find ourselves quick to jump to conclusions; we criticize the things they tell us; and we become preoccupied, paying too little attention as we listen. By doing so, we create invisible barriers that prevent them from coming to us.¹

One of the most important roles adults play in children's lives is creating an environment of open, effective communication.² Open communication means having an open attitude; actively listening to understand; and being available when our children need us and even when they don't. Effective communication requires active listening, expressing yourself, and finding time for talking.³

LISTENING: It is easy to get careless about really listening. We may assume we know what the other person means or we do not give them our full attention. When you actively listen you encourage the other person to talk about their thoughts, feelings, and what is important to them. (See page 2, *Active Listening*).

EXPRESSING YOURSELF: We may assume those closest to us know our thoughts and feelings, but this can lead to feelings of disappointment and frustration when we have been misread. Expressing your thoughts begins with listening to yourself: "What am I feeling and why?" Clearly state your thoughts, focusing on how something is affecting you rather than blaming the other person.

(Continued on page 2)

Helpful Hints for Talking With Your Kids

Tips for creating a positive environment for communication⁴

- Greet your child and address them by name
- Sit at your child's level and maintain good eye contact
- Ask questions in words they can understand
- Encourage them to talk with you about their day
- Listen attentively: Set aside things for a while
- Create time for talking: Turn off the television and instead play some games or have a family meal together
- Watch for clues: A child who hangs around usually wants to talk

References

- ¹Search Institute. (2003). *Ideas for Parents* (Newsletter #4). Retrieved December 15, 2007, from <http://www.search-institute.org>
- ²Covey, S. R. (1997). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*. New York, NY: Franklin Covey Company.
- ³Take Charge in Changing Times. (October 1998). *Improving Family Communication*. Iowa State University: University Extension.
- ⁴Communication with Young Children. (July 2008). *Working with the Young Child: Ages 4-8*. University of Arizona: Cooperative Extension.
- ⁵Cecil, N. L. (1995). *Raising Peaceful Children in a Violent World*. San Diego, CA: LuraMedia, Inc.
- ⁶Sears, W. & Sears, M. (2002). *The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do To Help Kids Turn Out Well*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.
- ⁷Nelson, J. (1996). *Positive Discipline*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.
- ⁸Sherlock, M. (2003). *Living Simply with Children: A Voluntary Simplicity Guide for Moms, Dads, and Kids Who Want to Reclaim the Bliss of Childhood and the Joy of Parenting*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press
- ⁹Shapiro, S. E. (2003). *The Secret Language of Children: How to Understand What Your Kids Are Really Saying*. Naperville, IL: Source books, Inc.

Communication Game

Title: *Listening With Love and Understanding*

Description: "Parroting" means hearing the words only and repeating those words back to the person. Divide the family members into pairs. To begin, Person A makes a simple statement; Person B repeats, or parrots back exactly what Person A said. Person B then makes a statement, and Person A parrots back in the same way.

Parroting helps family members listen carefully to the words others say. Were you able to listen carefully enough to catch every word the other person said?

The most basic and powerful way to connect with a person is to listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give to each other is our attention . . .A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.

~ Rachel Naomi Remen



Draw or write what you would change about how your family communicates.

Communication

Communication Flash

Active Listening:
What Makes a Good Listener?

Communication between you and your child includes more than just talking. Good communication requires that we ACTIVELY listen to what the other person is saying. Doing so sends a clear message that they are important enough to have your undivided attention, in turn, building their confidence and self-esteem.⁵ As you listen to your child remember to:⁶

- **Listen empathetically**-Provide brief comments to show your child you understand and are feeling what they are saying: “how wonderful,” “you must be so happy.”
- **Listen patiently**-Be slow to speak. Sometimes we get so caught up in wanting to fix our child’s problems that we forget to just listen and children can sense when we are not paying careful attention to what they say.
- **Listen to the main message**-When your child is done talking sum up what you just heard: “What I think I hear you saying is....” By doing so, you demonstrate you are listening and understand what is being said.
- **Listen using your body language:** Make eye contact, nod your head, and use facial expressions to convey you are paying attention and understand what is being said and felt.



Communication-(kə-myōō'nī-kā'shən) n. Exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.
Listen–(līs'ən) v. To give close attention with the purpose of hearing; to give ear; to hearken; to attend.
Body language-(bōd'ē lāng'gwīj) n. The gestures, postures, and facial expressions by which a person manifests various physical, mental, or emotional states and communicates nonverbally with others.

(Continued from page 1)

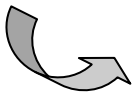
FINDING TIME: Strong family communication takes time. Make a concerted effort to spend time together talking as a family. You can make time to talk in the car traveling to activities; when you are playing games or working on chores; or schedule family time each week-Friday family fun time or Tuesday night “family night”.

Activities to Increase Communication with Kids

Try these activities to improve communication with your kids:^{7,8}

- **Hold family meetings:** Family meetings can be a time to facilitate positive communication, discuss problems, define solutions, and reinforce family values.
- **Communicate without speaking:** send an e-mail or leave a note to let them know you care.
- **Provide choices:** Give kids choices with the everyday stuff so they learn to communicate their preferences.
- **Value everybody’s opinions:** Include kids in family discussions and ask their opinion about family matters.
- **Run an errand together:** Spend time together without interruptions.
- **Share before going to bed:** Encourage kids to reflect on the day and talk about their feelings.

Cut out and keep game on back



Louder than words: Using our body language to communicate
While words serve as the basis for communication, our tone of voice and body language--facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms, behaviors, body position--accounts for nearly 90% of our communication with others.⁹ As you connect with others remember to:
-Use a calm, warm tone of voice to convey interest.
-Make eye contact and use facial expressions to demonstrate you are interested and paying attention to what your child is saying.
-Use an appropriate physical distance for communicating--usually between 8 inches and 4 feet.
-Use an “open” body position: sitting with your arms folded or legs crossed demonstrates you are uninterested and only half present.