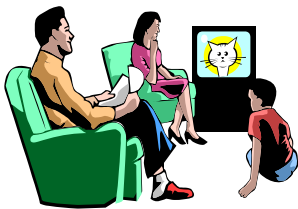
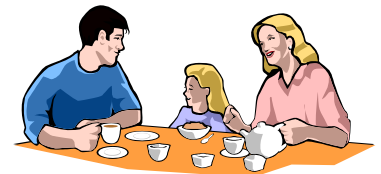


EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Written by Ms. Julie M. Armenta, M.A., Education & Family Specialist

Rapport with your child is highly beneficial and a **must** for effective communication! Understand and support your child's emotional and behavioral needs, and find ways to do this daily. Feed your child's self-empowerment and excellence as an individual. Body language and non-verbals are more than half of how we effectively communicate. Effective communication actually breaks down as follows: 7% words, 55% non-verbal cues and body language, and 38% voice tone or pitch. To build rapport, smile, lean forward, make eye contact, nod, and keep an open posture with your children. Always state to your child "I" or "we" statements instead of "you": for example, "We as parents are concerned about your behavior." Don't respond with "You are acting up again!" Children know when you mean business with just a look or a tone of voice as the first step of communicating with your child when you want immediate results. It is highly effective to use these strategies with your child. There is a big difference; quick ineffective responses will create quick ineffective behaviors from your child. Be a good listener; ask your child about his or her needs, goals, concerns, strengths, etc. Restate and paraphrase what they say to be sure you understand. Show respect to your child, in turn they will respect you as a parent!



A good parent does not give a child everything he or she wants. Saying no to your child is healthy and needed to create a healthy balance in your child's life. We need to teach children the difference between life's wants and needs; children don't usually know the difference between the two at times. As parents and educators, we need to model to our children and students healthy boundaries and behaviors. Don't feel compelled to give in when they whine or complain - this will only reinforce bad behaviors. Don't be fearful to teach and disagree with your children; they can sense fear or insecurity from parents, which creates disruptive behaviors and breakdown of communication. There must be a healthy balance of time to work and time to play for not only the child but the parent also. Children need both outlets and expectations – reward both behaviors when both good and appropriate behaviors are displayed.

d what circumstances cause inappropriate behavior and communication to break down. Monitor behaviors closely and correct the problem effectively and immediately, for example, do not wait until father comes home, etc. Deal with the situation as soon as possible; let your child know who's in charge, and that both parents are equally in charge. Be consistent at all times – if you miss being consistent even once, chances are that you may need to start completely over with your child to build consistent appropriate behaviors. They will try to get your attention, and try to get away with whatever they can. Try not to personalize their comments and attitudes. Find out what the underlying problem is and correct it immediately. When children are upset they will say things and attack to get your attention. Stay calm and respond to get better results with your children. Usually comments and complaints have nothing to do with the true problem. For example, being angry with one's brother could actually mean being upset that all of mom's attention is going to the brother. "I don't care," means, "I don't know how to deal with this problem" or "I feel like I'm performing poorly." "I'm mad/bored," means, "I feel hurt, sad, etc." and could indicate a cry for help.



Develop a support system for your child. Don't feel like you need to do this alone; you can work with a counselor, a mentor, or an educational specialist, such as myself, to help you reinforce these strategies. Sometimes children need role models to talk with openly, trust in, and relate with. I highly recommend this outlet for children to see fantastic benefits for all who are involved with this process. A neutral authority figure can create a special place for them; a non-reactive and safe environment where the child feels comfortable to relate with an adult.

Use reinforcements that work for your child – what matters most to them is the most effective way to reward in order to reinforce appropriate behaviors and effective communication. Also, withholding privileges with what matters most to your child, makes effective consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Behaviors will not change if the “reinforcer” is not working as a reinforcement of good, appropriate behaviors. Parents need to set the limits and create structure with the child and family. It will work for both you and all involved. I have helped several families write effective contracts to change behavior and assist with effectively communicating to your child what is expected. Have your child agree to uphold his end of the bargain. Homework everyday from 3:30-5 must be completed; 5-6 will be outside recreation time. Put in the contract specific expectations and once the child's behavior is completed, parents do need to fulfill their promises, such as allowances, special privileges, etc. If the contract is not fulfilled, parents must also be consistent with consequences. Here is an example of contract specifications: “...included but not limited to...” You won't want to reward for homework that is completed, but not done efficiently or through copying or cheating. Be specific in your contract so that there is no confusion, and communication is clear, concise, and controlled.



IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILD, PARENTS NEED TO BE ABLE TO ACT AND THINK LOGICALLY AND RATIONALLY AT ALL TIMES, AND BE IN AGREEMENT AND DISCIPLINE TOGETHER. BE PROACTIVE, NOT REACTIVE! YOU NEED TO WORK TOGETHER WITH YOUR CHILDREN, NOT AGAINST EACH OTHER. WORK AS A TEAM AND BE UNBEATABLE INSTEAD OF WORKING ALONE AND BEING UNPRODUCTIVE. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD WILL CREATE A MORE BALANCED LIFE FOR YOUR CHILD, FAMILY, AND IN THE COMMUNITY, AND AVOID LONG-TERM PROBLEMS AND CREATE LONG-TERM SUCCESS!



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