

Five Keys to Communicating with Your Child

Communicating with your children can be frustrating and difficult. The difficulties are often accentuated in adolescence when the child is moving through a variety of frequently confusing transitions. Effective communication with you as a parent is vitally important to the development of your child. Some keys to effective communication include the following:

Affirmation

Affirming your child is vital. There are several aspects of affirmation:

1. Affirming your child's opinions and points of view. This does not mean that you necessarily agree with your child. It means that you have taken the time to listen, hear and understand them.

2. Affirming your child's value despite their behaviors. Affirmation involves constantly validating the worth and value of your child. It lets them know that no matter what they do, or how many mistakes they might make, they are of tremendous value to you. Affirmation says, "I disagree with what you did or how you acted, but your behavior doesn't diminish my love for you."

3. Affirming your child's dreams and aspirations. Often parents attempt to impose their dreams on their children. Affirmation involves partnering in your child's dreams for their lives, affirming their ability to do great things and being a source of constant encouragement.

Being affirmed by a parent builds a sense of security, stability and self-confidence that is imperative to the child's well-being. It also creates an environment where your child knows that they can say anything to you as a parent without jeopardizing your relationship with them. This opens tremendous doors of communication.

Acceptance

Acceptance helps your child become comfortable with who they are.

1. Acceptance means that your child doesn't have to change to be accepted by you. It is an unconditional acceptance of who your child is exactly as they are.

2. It means that your child does not have to achieve, or be successful, or meet some criteria to be accepted and loved. There is not some standard that they have to meet to be acceptable. They are accepted for who they are, not for what they do.

3. Acceptance is communicating that despite the failures and the setbacks, in spite of less than stellar performances and in the face of embarrassing blunders, your acceptance of your child is untarnished.

This provides your child a sense of security that allows them to fail knowing that failure becomes a learning experience rather than an embarrassment. It gives them the stability to risk, to try new things, to venture out knowing that if they fall, your acceptance of them will not fail as well. It also lets them know that their value is not based on achievements, but on who they are as people.

Affection

It is important that you display love to your child. You can express your affection by:

1. Verbally telling your child that you love them, by giving them a hug, by telling them how special they are, by communicating how very thankful you are that you have the privilege of being their parent and sharing in their lives.

2. Make them feel special by pointing out their unique gifts, talents and abilities.

3. Express your love to them in a way that makes them feel special, valued and deeply cared for. This creates a bond with your child that engenders honest and deep communication.

Availability

Too often, parents are caught in the rush and demands of life. We load our calendars with all the "stuff" that we have to do. There develops a separation of sorts that diminishes our time with our children. Availability means:

1. Prioritizing your children as more important than anything other than your spouse and God.

2. Saying to your child that you are available to them regardless of where you're at or what you're doing.

3. Setting aside time with your child. To a child, love is spelled "t-i-m-e." Time set aside to spend with your child tells them that they are of value. You are giving them the gift of yourself.

Availability tells your children that their value is substantial as they are of primary importance in your life. It lets them know they can come to you at any time with anything.

Accountability

Accountability involves making your child responsible for their behaviors. It prepares them for adulthood where society will expect that a person be responsible for their actions, behaviors and decisions. In addition, accountability builds character in a child as they shoulder responsibility rather than run from it or place blame.

When the other four keys are in place, children are much more able and willing to be accountable. The relationship with the parent or parents is established which creates a greater desire in the child to be accountable. In addition, it also creates an environment within which the child can assume responsibility for behaviors and know that he or she will continue to be loved, cherished and accepted.

This information is presented for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for informed medical advice or training. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat a mental health problem without consulting a qualified health or mental health care provider.

*Everyone experiences difficulties in life.
We have been helping people find solutions since 1988.*

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU WOULD BENEFIT FROM COUNSELING?

These conditions or situations are widely experienced and may indicate the need for professional counseling:

- Depression, discouragement
- Lack of motivation, apathy
- Anger, bitterness, resentment
- General dissatisfaction with life or relationships
- Difficulties in handling life events
- Marriage and family conflicts
- Sexual dysfunction
- Difficulties in decision making
- Physical ailments for which no medical cause can be found, such as headaches and lower back pain. (Medical consultation may be required in conjunction with therapy.)
- Difficulty in building and maintaining satisfying relationships
- Job stress, inability to keep jobs
- Inability to deal with a child's misbehavior or school problems
- Compulsive behaviors (eating disorders, spending, sexual issues)
- Issues related to low self-esteem or lack of self-worth
- Excessive dependence upon the approval or validation of others

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Every Journey,
One Mission*

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD



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