

# Effective Communication

Objective: To help kids learn to communicate more effectively.

Talli Tips: Verbally identify communication skills and barriers daily.

Spend time discussing effective communication skills and barriers to effective communication. Use the enclosed list to assist you in the process.

When you observe a young person communicating well, acknowledge their efforts, draw attention to healthy communication. Compliment them on the skilled execution.

When you observe a young person not communicating effectively, call attention to the behavior (not the individual!) discuss and role-play examples of ways the communication could and should be improved.

Classroom Teaching Tip: For a solid impact, allow the young person to create a communication skills and barriers poster to hang in the classroom.

Activity: Hang a wooden heart (easily purchased at a store like Michaels) in your home or the classroom setting. Whenever the young person says a put down or verbally hurts another person, walk over to the heart and hammer a nail into the heart. Be prepared, young people are so creative. If the young person says he/she was only kidding, take the nail out and intentionally call attention to the hole left in the heart. Explain to the young person that apologies, although good, can't remove the hole in the heart. The damage is done; use this as an opportunity to explain that feelings are real. The goal is to help a young person understand that words hurt and often leave a very hurtful scar in the heart. Character Counts!

Compassion: a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, a strong desire to aid and support in the suffering.

Praise the young person when they show compassion. Intentionally allow the young person to be in a situation to serve and show compassion.

Courtesy: respectful and considerate acts and expressions. Teach the young person what it means to be courteous. Role-play courtesy and describe behaviors that demonstrate it.

Respect: To treat others the way you want to be treated. Compare and contrast respectful behavior and disrespectful behavior.

## Healthy Communication Skills

- Being caring towards others
- Expressing thoughts and ideas with clarity
- Choosing to be sincere and honest
- Making eye contact
- A willingness to compromise
- Choosing to help others and be available
- Avoid being judgmental
- Desires and expects the best
- Choosing to be responsible for communication
- Agree to disagree

## Unhealthy Communication Skills

- Lack of clarity
- Emotions that are out of control
- A willingness to lie
- Lack of eye contact
- Sarcasm and put downs
- Hurtful language
- Thinking about a response rather than listening to what is being said
- Negative and inappropriate body language and facial expressions
- Constant competition for the last word
- An uncaring attitude

Explain that everyone communicates but learning how to communicate effectively requires practice and intention. Yes, some have a very natural flair for communicating and seem to be very confident but many need to learn how to communicate. Consider the following steps for training a young person to develop stronger and healthier communication skills:

- Healthy communication begins with the heart. A young person that has been trained to communicate in a healthy manner understands that it is about what is being shared not who is saying it or how it is presented.
  
- Eye contact lends towards care and credibility. When a young person is lovingly encouraged to make eye contact they will greatly improve their natural ability to communicate in a positive manner.
  
- Developing a young person's ability to ask open ended questions will lead them down a path of showing interest in others. Help the young person learn how to phrase questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no.
  
- Demonstrate the idea of listening more than talking. A general rule is listen, speak, and listen. A great activity for developing this is to throw a tennis ball back and forth and to allow the young person to only speak when the tennis ball is in their hands. Carry on a conversation while throwing the tennis ball back and forth to model what it means to converse in a healthy manner.

Learning how to communicate takes time and everyone will advance at their own pace. Be intentional and allow the young person to practice in a safe environment. Role play up-coming events and occasions with the young person to allow them to develop confidence.

Solid communication is as stimulating as a cup of black coffee and just as difficult to sleep after.

By Talli Moellering

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