

## PARENTING WITH CLARITY

### *Talk, LISTEN AND LEARN*

"Effective communication isn't just a free-for-all and it certainly isn't a no-holds-barred argument where disrespect from your children is tolerated in an effort to show you're an enlightened and modern parent. It's important to set rules, guidelines or boundaries for these interactions with your kids. My father's cornerstone rule was that I could talk until I was blue in the face as long as I didn't get disrespectful. I could argue a point for hours to try to persuade him to change his mind or do things differently. He'd let me go on until I went hoarse, but if my words, tone or attitude became less than respectful, he turned me off quickly. If that happened, I had no right to appeal.


Just as my father policed my tone and attitude, you have to police your tone and attitude. You won't always get the response you want while trying to communicate with your children, but you must discipline yourself to keep trying to get your message through in the right way. Don't be intimidated or angered by eye rolling and heavy sighs. If the child sits there and refuses to engage, that doesn't mean her ears aren't working. You'd be surprised how your words will be played back in her mind later.

Often, teens just don't want to admit that their parents might be making sense. But they still listen. Sometimes you have to take what you can get. Just getting a teenager to stay in one place long enough to receive a message can pay dividends down the road. Here are some guidelines that can be particularly helpful when you're trying to get through to a child. These suggestions, when followed, have proven to be very effective in drawing children of all ages out of their shells and into an exchange:

- Approach all communications in a way that protects or enhances your child's self-esteem, even when you're in discipline mode.

- For example, it would be wrong to handle unacceptable academic performance by saying something like, 'You're lazy and irresponsible.' A better approach might be 'You and I know you're capable of doing so much better. Let's find a way that you can perform at a level that you can be proud of.'
- Narrow the focus of your task-oriented communications as much as possible. Decide in advance what your objective is and don't allow yourself or your child to jump around to a number of different topics. Hopping around will just create confusion and make it difficult for you to reach a resolution. If you find yourself drifting, simply say something like 'That's a discussion for another time, but right now I want us to stay focused on what we came here to discuss.'
- Use your communications to generate solutions rather than to relive problems. No one can change what's already happened. Problem-solving communication should be focused on moving beyond what's happened toward what you want to happen in the future. Be very specific about the behavioral changes or outcomes you expect. An admonishment to do better is not very helpful. Questions that can help you stay solution-oriented include 'How can we avoid this occurring in the future?'; 'What have we learned so that we can specifically do something different next time?'; 'What would have been a better approach or solution to the situation?'

## TIMING IS EVERYTHING



"If you don't talk to your kid about the little stuff, they won't talk to you about the big stuff."

"Too often, the only communication that takes place between you and your child is when a crisis has erupted. It's important to talk about critical issues outside of stress-packed situations. The time to discuss curfew, for example, is not when the child comes home thirty minutes late. The rules should be established before the kid goes out at night. If he breaks curfew, save the discussion of consequences until the calm of the next morning when you both have clear heads. Yelling and screaming in the heat of the moment is the poorest form of communication you can practice. Sometimes when it comes to communication, timing is everything.

Also, don't restrict your communication efforts just to problem-solving. If problems are all you ever talk about in a relationship, you'll likely have a problem relationship. Talking about things that don't matter can be just as important, because it serves as practice, and creates a trusting foundation, for those times when you need to talk about serious stuff. If your child is used to talking to you on a really regular basis he won't feel nearly as conspicuous when it comes time to broach the really important subjects. He'll know you better if he talks to you frequently and that familiarity can be very comforting. If the child has come to appreciate many different aspects of your personality, such as humor, compassion, commitment and vulnerability, he'll be much more at home in knowing how to start a meaningful conversation and in predicting how it's likely to turn out."

"To communicate effectively, you can't be giving yourself one message—such as 'This can never be worked out'—while at the same time offering your child a message of hope and forgiveness. Solid external communications must be congruent with internal communications. You can't ride to the rescue if you sabotage yourself along the way. This isn't the time for self-doubt, self-incrimination or self-criticism. Sure, even adults have self-doubts and insecurities. We can psych ourselves out too, so you need to be conscious and careful about your inner thoughts during a time of crisis. Banish the following messages from your brain because they'll only get in the way of your rescue attempts:

- This is all my fault.
- There's no way we're ever going to come out of this one.
- I can't deal with this.
- I can't get through this.

Counter self-defeating thoughts with more positive messages that will move you through the crisis, instill confidence and energize you. Say things like:

- We can work this out.
- We'll get through this.
- I know I can handle this.

(Talk, Listen & Learn cont.)

- Focus on the issue at hand and avoid personal attacks and character assassination. Stay focused on the behaviors and the consequences of the behaviors, rather than on the child and character traits such as honesty and integrity. Those traits may in fact be extremely important, but it's better to talk about how behaviors reflect on those traits, rather than questioning whether a child exhibits them. Avoid comments like 'You're a liar and not trustworthy.' Instead, say things like 'That kind of behavior or choice reflects poorly on your honesty and integrity. If you choose differently, then others will be able to see your good qualities. I really want you to make some different choices in the future. Let's talk about what those choices might be.'
- Stay in the here and now. Throwing old behaviors and circumstances in your child's face is nonproductive and will cause him or her to feel helpless. Focus on the current situation only. If you solve problems in the present, the past will seem increasingly remote and irrelevant.
- Keep your problem-solving . . .  
  
Don't ever take your child to task in the presence of peers, relatives or siblings, unless they're directly involved in the situation. Dressing the child down in front of others will cause humiliation, embarrassment and resentment. Even though you may feel that's not what you're doing, it might be seen very differently by the child. Take it private and keep it private.
- Conclude on a positive note. It's important for your child to feel there's an opportunity for rehabilitation and that he or she has some formula for success going forward."

## SAVE-A-HEART

THE FIRST 1.5 HOURS IS CPR TRAINING, THE SECOND 1.5 HOURS IS FIRST AID. MAKE CERTAIN YOU LET THEM KNOW YOU ARE WITH CBTS IF YOU ATTEND THE COURSE.

WEST JORDAN LIBRARY (1970 W. 7800 So.)  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25 5:30 p.m.

SANDY LIBRARY (10075 S. 1350 E.)  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 5:30 p.m.

HOLLADAY LIBRARY (2150 E. 4800 So.)  
SATURDAY, MARCH 14 10:15 A.M.

TAYLORSVILLE LIBRARY (4870 S. 2700 W.)  
TUESDAY, MARCH 17 5:30 p.m.

**REMINDER:** You can receive between 1/2 - 1 hour of training credit just for reading the monthly newsletter and completing a paragraph on what you learned from the issue. Also, Alyssa has packets available on a variety of subjects to assist you in completing your annual training hours.

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## USE COMMUNICATION TO PREPARE & REHEARSE FOR THE FUTURE

"Communicate with your children to anticipate the temptations and challenges they're likely to face. Get them to rehearse through role-playing. Have them play out scenarios in their minds to determine how they might handle difficult situations. Obviously, parents don't want a sixteen-year-girl to be in the backseat of a car alone with a boy at midnight. But if she finds herself there, we want her to be prepared to handle that situation.

The Boy Scout motto has it right: Be prepared. Parents, take that to heart in communicating with your children. Look ahead and prepare them for the typical scenarios that may play out. Lawyers never go into a trial without anticipating what the other side will pull in the way of surprise evidence or testimony."



## LEARN FROM SUCCESSES AS WELL AS FAILURES

"As a parent, you need to be there to help your children acknowledge and reinforce their successes, their good decisions and wise choices. How powerful and empowering it is for a child to hear a father say, 'I think you should be proud of the way you handled yourself.'

Help your children learn from their successes.

At every opportunity, review for them what they did right. Tell them why you think they were successful; point out their positive attributes. Every time you feel the need to criticize, soften it with something positive. It's critical for children to learn to build on their strengths instead of always trying to compensate for their weaknesses. Help them understand what their strengths are so they can go to them and develop their talents. When children learn to build on their strengths, they are more likely to respond to challenges with determination rather than fear."



## HUMOR HELPS

"If you want to raise children who have the ability to laugh at life's insanity, you've got to help them see life's funny side. Being a parent means making tough decisions and being serious when the situation demands it, but that doesn't mean you should never lighten up, laugh or make fun of yourself.

Laughter is an important part of being human and if you laugh with your child, you strengthen the connection with him or her. Laughter is also a terrific way to reduce stress and your child needs to know that it has healing power. One of the marks of a successful family is that it has plenty of inside family jokes to share. Keep crazy family moments alive by repeating them and having a good laugh at them. This provides a shared connection and reminds everyone that you're all just people who make crazy mistakes but you love and respect one another. Sharing laughter is an expression of humanity and community."

## COMMUNICATION AUDIT

Let's do an evaluation in which you create communication opportunities. For each of the following statement, choose either Consistently (C), Often (O), Inconsistently (I), or Never (N).

	C	O	I	N
1. I acknowledge when my child does something that is positive and I give him full credit for that event.	4	3	2	1
2. I acknowledge when my child does something that is negative and I try to understand her feelings.	4	3	2	1
3. When my child achieves something, I like to review without criticism his thinking, intentions and the behavior that brought about the results.	4	3	2	1
4. When my child achieves something negative, I like to review the thinking, intentions and the behavior that brought about the negative results.	4	3	2	1
5. Can your child name five good qualities of himself or herself to you? Can you affirm them?	4	3	2	1
6. Can you describe your child's feelings?	4	3	2	1
7. Can you and your child reach an understanding of your intentions and behaviors?	4	3	2	1
8. Do you and your child talk on a daily basis?	4	3	2	1
9. Do you and your child recognize each other's feelings and purposes or someone he or she can envision as examples of success?	4	3	2	1
10. Do you recognize your child's definitions of success?	4	3	2	1

**Scoring:** If for any item you chose 3, that behavior should go to the head of your to-do list. And if you chose less than 3, it becomes a must-do.

## PROCTOR TRAINING

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

6:30 p.m.

220 East 3900 South

Presenter: Planned Parenthood

For: All Proctors

### F.Y.I.

D.C.F.S. Practice Model Training is a 12 hour mandatory training all proctor parents are required to eventually take. The next session will be held in April. Please let Lori or Alyssa know if you will be able to attend these sessions so you can get registered.

Thursday, April 8	9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Thursday, April 15	9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Thursday, April 22	9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

### WHY, WHY, WHY....

Why do we press harder on a remote control when we know the batteries are almost dead?

Why do banks charge a fee on 'insufficient funds' when they already know there is not enough money?

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars; but have to check when you say the paint is still wet?

Why doesn't Tarzan have a beard?

Why does Superman stop bullets with his chest, but ducks when you throw a revolver at him?

Whose idea was it to put an "s" in the word "isep"?

Is there ever a day that mattresses are not on sale?

Why do people constantly return to the refrigerator with hopes that something new to eat will have materialized?

Why do people keep running over a string a dozen times with their vacuum cleaner, then reach down, pick it up, examine it, then put it down to give the vacuum one more chance?

If people evolved from apes, why are there still apes?

Why is it that whenever you attempt to catch something that's falling off the table you always manage to knock something else off?

In winter why do we try to keep the house as warm as it was in summer when we complained about the heat?

Why do Kamikaze pilots wear helmets?

