



How are you communicating?

A LESSON FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS
AND THEIR PARENTS

Brought to you by the Prevention Department at



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Communication is KEY!

During this time of isolation, it may be more difficult to communicate with our parents and our friends. Taking a couple of minutes out of the day to ask simple questions of one another can enhance mental health and break down communication barriers that may have been present before the pandemic. This can help between our parents, siblings, and friends by adding a new level of trust. The level of trust is lifted higher and higher in relationships when increased levels of communication is applied.

With all this being said, it is a key component that starts at home first. Grab your parent for 5 minutes a day when they are not working and just check-in on them and make sure they are doing okay too. Parents are also experiencing stress during this time.

Communication



What is communication?

Communication is sharing ideas and thoughts to another person. Communication has two parts: Sending and receiving messages.

To send information from one person to another you must be able to do the following:

1. **Get your thinking straight.** If you do not have your thoughts in line with what you want to say, your message will be confusing.
2. **Say what you mean.** Say exactly what is on your mind and how you feel.
3. **Be direct.** Try to be as straightforward as possible so that you don't confuse the listener. Remember, keep it short and direct.
4. **Be real.** Do not lie about what you want to say. Just say what is on your mind.
5. **Speak in images.** When you speak, be as descriptive as possible. The listener should be able to picture what you are saying.

What is communication?

Communication is sharing ideas and thoughts to another person in a neutral environment. Communication has two parts: Sending and receiving messages.

To receive information from one person to another you must be able to do the following:

We must learn to listen. To fully understand a person we must pay attention and listen attentively to what they are saying. This will help in understanding what they are feeling and/or help receive other types of information:



Active Listening

Active listening is the ability to focus completely on the person you are talking to. **Active listening** will help you understand their message and respond thoughtfully.



In order to show that you are actively listening:

Ask open-ended questions

Ask questions that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Example: instead of asking “are you having a good day today?” which they can answer with a simple “yes” or “no”. Ask the person “How is your day going?” This gives the other person a chance to express themselves more fully about their day and a chance for you to listen to them.

Share similar experiences

If the person has the same problem as you or a problem that you have had in the past, share your experiences which will help you build a closer connection to the person you are talking to.

There are 4 types of Communication

Verbal



Non-Verbal



Written



Visual



Verbal Communication

Verbal Communication is when you use your voice to communicate.

Keys to using Verbal Communication:

Use a Strong Confident Speaking Voice. When speaking, you want people to hear and understand you better. Speak in a clear voice

Use Active Listening Skills. This will help you understand what the other person is telling you.



Examples of Verbal Communication

- Talking
- Singing



Non-Verbal Communication



What is it?

Non-Verbal Communication are ways we communicate without using words. This can be through body language and facial expressions

Examples of Non-Verbal Communication

If someone is smiling. Based on the facial expression, we can see that the person is happy without even talking to them.

If someone is sitting at a table and they are closing their eyes and laying their head on the table this may indicate that they may be tired. We know this because of their body language.

Written Communication

What is it?

Written Communication is when you use language in a written form to communicate.

Examples of written Communication

- Sending a text to a friend or your parents
- Writing a letter to someone





Visual Communication

What is it?

Visual Communication is when you use visuals to convey your message to communicate.

Examples of Visual Communication

·The logo for Instagram is a camera because Instagram wants to send the message that their website is for posting pictures.

Sharing captions or messages on Snapchat, Tik Tok and Instagram are examples of visual communication.

Three Ways to Approach a Conversation:

Passive Approach

The passive approach means that you are placing the needs of others in front of your own. You want others to know how you feel, but you are not really sure how to say that without putting yourself first.

Example:

Person 1: "Hey, would you rather eat at Pizza Hut or Domino's?"

Person 2: "Oh, don't worry about what I want, I'll eat whatever you guys want."

Person 2 is not saying how they feel on the subject because they do not want to make anyone upset with their choice. For proper communication, it's important to state what you want. Be open and clear with your communication.

Three Ways to Approach a Conversation:

Aggressive Approach

The **aggressive approach** does not care about other people's feelings, nor do they care if someone's feelings get hurt.

Example:

Person 1: "Hey, would you like to watch TV with me?"

Person 2: "No I do not watch TV, TV is for losers."

In this approach, Person 1 is clear and open about the event taking place. However, Person 2 does not do a good job of listening to how person 1 feels about the event. Listening and caring about what the other person says is key to communication. We must be able to say what we feel, but also care about others' feelings too.

Three Ways to Approach a Conversation:

Assertive Approach

This approach shares how you feel without hurting anyone else that is included in the conversation. With this approach both speaker and listener state their position without hurting the other person's feelings.

Example:

Person 1: "Do you like playing sports?"

Person 2: "Yes, I like playing sports." Or "No, sports is not really my thing."

Both answers acknowledge what person 1 is asking in a respectful way. Person 2 properly answers the question without hurting Person 1 or their views.

Ways to Approach a Conversation:

For Parents

As parents, we may struggle to effectively communicate with our children. In this section, we share techniques and strategies to add to your "tool box" on how to have more open and meaningful conversations with your child.

Listen. If you want to know about what's going on in your teen's life, ask them open-ended questions. Give them the opportunity to talk about what they are going through especially during this time of uncertainty. We don't want to ask too many questions right off the bat which may be perceived as if you are "digging" for information as opposed to finding out what is going on with them. The idea is to show them that you are actively listening to them and that you care about what is going on in their life.

Validate their feelings. Let your children know that what they are feeling is okay. Talk to them and let them know that what their experiencing is normal. Talk to them about your own feelings.

Example: When someone calls your child a mean name, instead of saying "oh, you shouldn't be mad at that" or "just ignore them, they do not know what they are saying", validate their feelings. Let them know that it is okay to be upset. Also, during this time, children may feel scared or anxious, because they don't know what the future holds. Have conversations with them and talk through their feelings with them.

Ways to Approach a Conversation:

For Parents

Show trust. Teens want to be taken seriously, especially by their parents. Look for ways to show that you trust your teen. Asking them for a favor shows that you rely on them. Trust them to do certain things around the house. This will help your child gain more confidence in their abilities as well as improve the trust between you and your teen.

Don't be a dictator. You still get to set the rules, but be ready to explain them. While pushing the boundaries is natural for teenagers, hearing your thoughtful explanation about why certain rules are in place will help them understand your reasoning.

Give praise. Parents tend to praise children when they are young, however pre-teens and teens need praise too! They need the self-esteem boost just as much. Teenagers might act like they're too cool to care about what their parents think, but the truth is they still want your approval. They still look for positive praise especially during times of stress.

Ways to Approach a Conversation:

For Parents

Control your emotions. It's easy for your temper to flare when your teen is being rude, but don't respond in that way. Remember that you're the adult and they may not be able to or have the tools necessary to control their emotions. Count to ten or take some deep breaths before responding. If you notice your voice getting higher and your heart beating faster, take a break.

Come back to the conversation when both of you have calmed down.

Do things together. Talking isn't the only way to communicate. Spending time together and doing things you both enjoy will help to open the lines of communication. Whether it's cooking or hiking or playing board games together. These positive experiences will have a lasting impact and will create many happy memories.

Ways to Approach a Conversation:

For Parents

Share regular meals. Sitting down to eat a meal together as a family is another great way to stay close. Dinner conversations give every member of the family a chance to check in and talk casually about what is going on in everyone's lives. Having a cellphone free conversation will go a long way with opening the lines of communication. Kids who are more comfortable sharing about their day will be more open about sharing other things that go on in their lives.

Be observant. It's normal for kids to go through some changes as they mature, but pay attention if you notice changes to their mood, behavior, energy level, or appetite. Likewise, take note if they stop wanting to do things that used to make them happy, or if you notice them isolating themselves. If you see a change in your teen's daily ability to function, ask them about it and be supportive (without being judgmental). They may need your help and/or it could be a sign they may need to talk to a mental health professional.

Communication Activities

Situation Samples

Have a list of scenarios where assertive communication would be the most effective. Offer the student an opportunity to practice responses to the situations. Have them demonstrate aggressive, passive, and then assertive styles. When they know the difference, they may be better-equipped to practice these skills in real life scenarios.

Some sample scenarios could be:

You are standing in line at the check-out and two salespeople are engrossed in a deep conversation ignoring you.

Your teacher graded a paper that you feel should have received a higher mark.

Someone calls you a name that is hurtful.

Go through various options for responses and get the teens brainstorming.

Communication Activities

Role-playing

Role-play with your child. Come up with scenarios from the past where either you or your teen behaved in an passive, aggressive or assertive way. Discuss with your teen what would have been a better way to handle those particular situations. If your teen is working, let them know that these techniques can also be used in the workplace. Show them real-life examples. This gives them the chance to learn from mistakes, and the "permission" to express their needs during the next uncomfortable situation. Have a list of possible scenarios ready just in case the brainstorming doesn't produce enough opportunities to explore.



Would You Rather?

A fun way to communicate with others is getting to know each other better. Ask questions or statements with choices. Ask why they prefer one thing over the other. It's a great and fun way to break the ice!

Would you rather

use a smartphone to do your work or a desktop/laptop?

Would you rather

only charge your phone once a week or not have a camera on your phone?

Would you rather

only use email to communicate or only use voice calls (no video calls)? Would you rather never play video games again or never use your favorite mobile app again?

Would you rather

say the morning announcements or be the school sports commentator?