

# COMMUNICATION

*Saying What You Mean and Meaning What You Said*

Communicating is the act of sharing information between people. The information is often spoken or written, but can also be through body language. We all spend our day trying to communicate with others in some way. As the parent or caregiver of a child with mental health needs some of our communication is vital to the well being of our child.

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD

*“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.”  
(Mother Teresa)*

Good communication is an important parenting tool. Children develop a sense of their own self-worth and how you feel about them from how you communicate with them.

Listening to children:

- Listen with your feelings and your eyes, not just your ears. Watch for and respond to your child’s attempts to communicate.
- The best listening is silent listening. Keep your eyes on your child, and do not engage in other activities while you are listening.
- Rephrase what your child is saying to reflect both its content and its feelings without adding your own interpretation.



## Try This: Reflective Listening

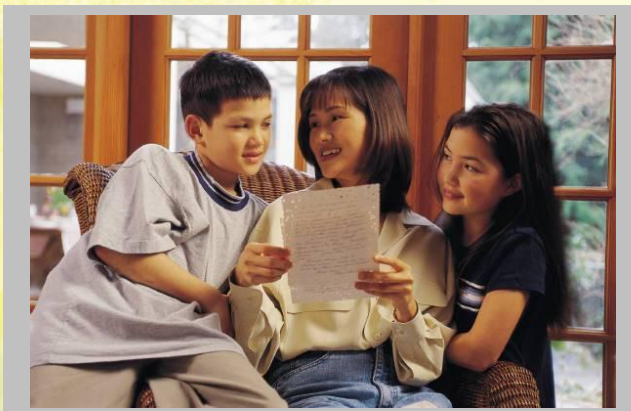
“I hear you saying \_\_\_\_\_”

“You seem to feel \_\_\_\_\_”

Be aware - your tone of voice and posture can also affect your communication. You may need to help your child put words to the feelings they are having. Pausing before immediately suggesting solutions or giving directions allows a child to solve the problem on their own.

**TRY THESE WORDS OF  
ENCOURAGEMENT OR PRAISE!**

*Excellent, Marvelous, Wow, Good for you, Very nice, Much better, Keep it up, You are the best, I'm sure glad you're my kid, I love you*



*Talking about what is happening at school is important.*

## **Allies with Families**

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for Children's Mental Health**

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(Communicating with your child continued)

Talking to children:

- Listen carefully and politely. Don't interrupt your child when he or she is trying to tell you something.
- Show your child to accept him or herself, regardless of what he or she has done.
- Aim for praise to outnumber correction by 10 to 1.
- Use plenty of nonverbal praise such as touches, hugs, winks, pats, etc.
- Correct your child in private when possible, especially away from peers or siblings.
- Praise your child for not misbehaving (for example, "I am proud of you for staying calm and using a soft voice.")

### **COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL**

*"Communication works for those who work at it." (John Powell)*

Children with mental health needs often need help to be successful at school. Parents need to have good communication skills to work with the school staff. While it is important to be direct and know what it is you need from the school, the way you say things matters.

It is helpful to make statements rather than accusations. Communication is smoother when both parties feel listened to and respected. Try to frame comments and concerns in non-threatening words such as:

- "Let me share with you..."
- "How do you see..."
- "Could you show me the data that shows that information?"
- "I get the sense we are not on the same page."

(Communicating with the school continued)

- “Speaking for myself...”
- “I appreciate...”
- “This looks good, but I’d like to have some time to think about it further.”

When parents and teachers communicate well the child always comes out the winner.

### COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD’S DOCTOR

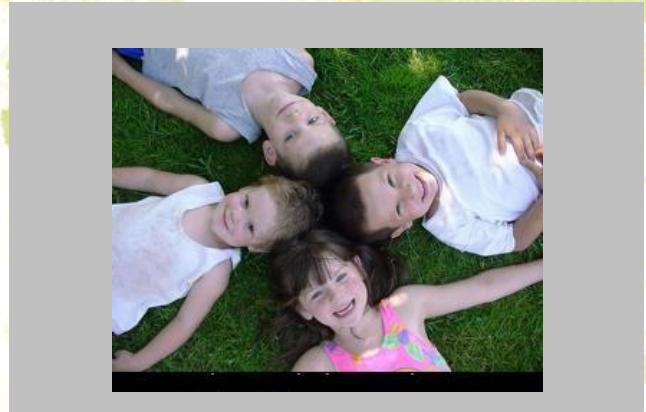
*“The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives.” (Anthony Robbins)*

When our child is under a doctor’s care, we should feel included in the treatment and understanding of the issues. Sometimes parents are scared or embarrassed about asking questions or pushing for information. But a parent has the right to know how to best help their child. Good communication skills on behalf of your child are important.

You might ask questions such as:

- “Can you help my child?”
- “What is wrong, is there a specific diagnosis?”
- “Does my child need additional testing?”
- “What are your recommendations?”
- “How can our family help?”
- “What will treatment cost, and how long will it take?”

Continue to ask questions until you get the information you are seeking. If you don’t understand some of the language, ask for an explanation.

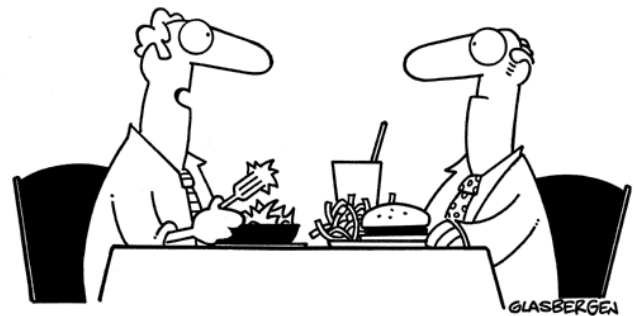


### *Kids Say the Darnedest Things:*

*When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure." "Look in your underwear, Grandma," he advised. "Mine says I'm four."*

*On the first day of school, a first grader handed his teacher a note from his mother. The note read, "The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents."*

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**“I learned about stress management from my kids. Every night after work, I drink as much chocolate milk as my stomach will hold, eat handfuls of sugary cereal straight from the box, then run around the house in my underwear squealing like a monkey.”**

# SIBSHOPS!

Come join the fun! Sibshops are recreational workshops for brothers and sisters (ages 8-13) who have a sibling with a special need or disability. Allies with Families hold Sibshops in communities throughout the Wasatch Front. And they are FREE! Call us today to register for an upcoming Sibshop! You'll love it!

## **HELP WANTED**

**Do you like to work with kids?  
Are you interested in doing something new?**

Allies with Families is looking for quality childcare workers to help with the "Operation Families Together" program. You must be over 18, enthusiastic about working with children (ages 0-6 years), and able to work evenings.

Don't miss this opportunity to make a difference in the community. Contact Allies with Families at 801-433-2595.

**(Applicants must pass background check)**