



Tips For Healthy Family Communication

1. **Communicate Frequently**—One of the most difficult tasks families face today is finding time to spend together. Despite busy work schedules, homework, and extra-curricular activities, it is imperative for healthy families to find time to communicate and to engage in meaningful conversation!

- Talk in the car.
- Eat meals as a family and take turns talking about your day.
- Schedule family meetings to talk about important issues that affect the whole family.
- Use bedtime to talk to your children, catch up, and tell them how much you love them.

2. **Communicate Clearly and Directly**—Healthy families communicate in a clear and direct manner and avoid indirect and vague communication. Clear and direct communication will serve to strengthen intimacy and emotional bonds and is especially important when attempting to resolve conflict.

- Use I statements to clearly communicate how you feel.
- “I feel _____ when _____. I imagine I feel this way because _____. In the future I hope I can _____.”

3. **Be an Active Listener**—An essential aspect of communication is listening to what others are saying! An active listener does his or her best to understand the point of view of the speaker. It is important to acknowledge and respect the speaker’s perspective by paying close attention to both verbal and nonverbal messages.

- Nod your head to indicate understanding.
- Ask for clarification when something is unclear.
- Accurately reflect important statements made by the speaker.

4. **Think About the Person With Whom You are Communicating**—Not all family members communicate in the same manner or at the same level. It is important to consider a family member’s age and developmental level in order to use appropriate language and to ensure delivering a clear message.

5. **Pay Attention to Nonverbal Messages**--Effective communicators pay close attention to verbal and nonverbal communication. It is important to be aware of facial expressions and body language. If cues are incongruent, it is important to point this out and explore how the speaker is really feeling.

6. **Be Positive**—While families often have to address difficult topics or problems between family members, effective communication is primarily positive. Research indicates that most unhappy family relationships are a result of negative communication patterns while healthy families have five positive interactions to each negative exchange. It is important for family members to compliment and encourage one another.