



EPRESS

Questions from Directors

Do you know of any videos on training for supervised visitation staff? How about role play? Are there any out there?

We are disappointed to report that we can't find any training videos online for supervised visitation. The problem with videos is that they become hokey and outdated quickly – they don't have a very long shelf life unless they are of commercial quality. And commercial quality is expensive to produce. We are creating a few scripts for role plays on communication skills for monitors, but you will have to use these at your own program trainings. Stay tuned!

I have a new staff member who monitored a visit. I only found out after the visit that the monitor knew the family. It's happened before that families get referred here and someone at the program knows them. But this monitor didn't tell me before the visit, and now I'm worried that the other parent is going to complain about the monitor.

Three things are important here: staff training, confidentiality, and client transparency. They are very big issues and can cause lots of problems if you don't pay attention to them. First, we won't assume that the monitor intentionally withheld information from you. Instead, we will assume that the monitor did not realize that she was supposed to tell you about knowing or being related to clients as soon as she realizes it. If this is the case, it's time to go back over the policies for program personnel. The Model Code of Conduct requires monitors to decline to monitor cases in which he or she may have a conflict of interest. (Page 74 Report to Fl. Legislature). Training is required on professional boundaries and conflicts of interest. (Page 71) Second, the fact that the monitor knows the clients must be discussed immediately, and you should speak to the monitor about how important confidentiality and disclosure are. My advice is to use a different monitor for the next visit. You can tell the parents that you are using a new monitor because you didn't realize that the first one knew a parent, and remind the parents that this happens from time to time. Be transparent; don't try to hide anything. Put a notation in the file. And ensure that the monitor who knows the parent does not

have access to the file. Even though you are sure that the monitor would not interfere with the case, you should protect that file. Remember, if you ever feel that a monitor is seeking or divulging unauthorized information, you must act immediately to correct the situation. Clients must know and feel that the program is being fair and impartial.

Benefits of Play for Children

By Jerry Kivett

Introduction:

As we discussed in a prior phone conference, play is an important part of every child's development. Play stimulates neurological and social development in children. This E-press will provide:

- An outline of the neurological benefits of play for children
- An outline of the social benefits of play for children
- A definition of and emphasis on the importance of free play for children

Children today are spending more time in front of computers and televisions and less time playing with peers. You, as a supervised visitation provider, can utilize the following information to emphasize the importance of play for children to parents and encourage them to make sure their child is regularly participating in play time. Parents should be encouraged to set up several weekly or even daily scheduled times for free play for their children in order to ensure that their children are actively participating in free play and receiving all of its benefits.

Neurological Benefits:



Play has several major benefits for the development of children's brains. Play changes the connections between neurons in the front end of the brain, which is the executive control center responsible for regulating emotions and decision-making. Therefore, play can help develop these important life skills, and without play, these neurons are

never changed. Also, play activates the entire neocortex and can actually change genes as well. In studies done on rats (because of ethical issues in conducting studies of this nature on humans), out of 1,200 genes measured, approximately one-third of the genes were changed dramatically by only a half-hour of play. Play improves memory in children by stimulating the cerebral cortex as well. Finally, play triggers the secretion of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which is an essential substance in the growth and development of brain cells. Studies have found increased levels of BDNF in rats that engage in play. In summary, the neurological benefits of play include:

- Increased emotional intelligence
- Developed decision-making skills
- Improved memory
- Increased growth and development of the brain

All of these factors illustrate how important play is for the healthy development of every child's brain.

The Importance of Free Play:

Free play is play time spent between children without any pre-structured games, rulebooks, or adults acting as coaches. It is up to the children to negotiate the rules of what and how they will play together. This structure of establishing rules in free play can be seen across species, and typically involves standard rules such as not inflicting pain, taking turns, and playing fairly. Negotiating the rules in free play teaches children how to navigate complex social interactions with their peers. Some of the other skills children learn from free play include:

- How to work in groups
- Negotiation
- How to share with others and take turns
- How to self-advocate
- Conflict resolution
- Communication skills
- Decision-making
- Resilience (How to make mistakes and learn to recover through play)

Social Development Benefits:

Along with all of these important skills that can be learned and developed through free play, there are many more important benefits of play for children's social development. Play helps children develop pro-social behaviors that teach them how to interact with other children in positive ways. Studies have shown that children who engage in at



least 15 minute breaks of free play throughout the school day have better behavior and greater attention in the classroom. Also, play allows children to learn and develop a team mentality, which helps children become more aware of others' feelings. Simple play can help develop these important social skills needed to handle diverse and complex social interactions at a young age.

Play is positive for children's general physical health as well. Play keeps children active and engaging in movement, which helps to maintain physical health and reduce risks of various health conditions such as heart disease. Finally, children who engage in more free play also achieve higher grades in school because of the positive effects of play on neurological and social development. A study found that a higher level of social skills in third grade was a predictor for higher academic performance in eighth grade among a sample of students, while early academic achievement did not predict higher academic performance in eighth grade. This study suggests that higher levels of social skills at an early age predict greater academic achievements later in life, and free play can help develop these social skills. In summary, play helps children develop skills and results in many positive outcomes, such as

- Development of pro-social behaviors
- Increased healthy interactions with other children
- Better behavior in school settings
- Greater attention span in classroom
- Understanding of team mentality
- Ability to handle diverse and complex social interactions
- Maintaining an active lifestyle, resulting in increased physical health
- Reduced risks of health conditions, such as heart disease
- Higher academic performance and achievement, in the short and long-term

The benefits of play are extensive in relation to social development, allowing for children to develop healthy relationships, interact socially in their family and school environments, and grow physically strong. Play helps children better function as team members, friends, family members, students, and athletes, enabling them to ultimately fill more roles and develop healthily.

Conclusion:

Free play is extremely important for the healthy development of all children. Play stimulates areas of the brain that control the regulation of emotion and decision-making and even alters the



genes and connections between neurons in these sections of the brain. Free play also teaches children important social skills that help them learn to process complex social interactions. These skills include decision-making, sharing, conflict resolution, and many more. The social benefits of consistent engagement in play can also lead to higher levels of attention from children in the classroom, better physical health, and higher grades for children. It is important that children are regularly engaging in free play from an early age. Parents and supervised visitation providers should both ensure that free play is a part of every child's routine to promote healthy child development.

Resources:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/ed/2014/08/06/336361277/scientists-say-childs-play-helps-build-a-better-brain>

<http://pss.sagepub.com/content/11/4/302.long>

<http://www.livescience.com/15541-top-5-benefits-play.html>

<http://udel.edu/~roberta/play/benefits.html>

<http://www.parentingscience.com/benefits-of-play.html>

<http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2014/07/let-em-out-the-many-benefits-of-outdoor-play-in-kindergarten/>

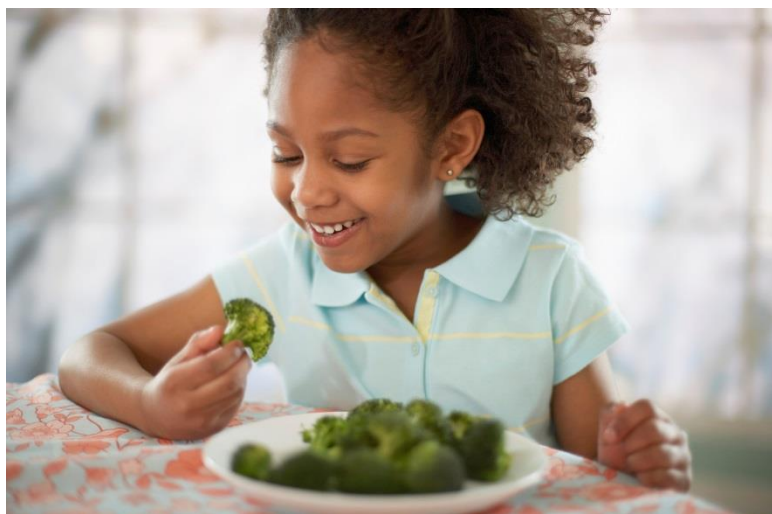
Tips to Help Picky Eaters

By Kayla Kirk

One of the things that parents complain about frequently is the fact that their children are picky eaters. Here's information that can help!

Introduction

Many children go through stages in which they are picky eaters. Many children have an instinctive desire for sweet and salty foods, causing it to be very difficult to get children to eat healthy, nutritious foods and many times leading to frustration, anger, and worrying in adults. As a



visitation monitor, you may hear parents discuss their frustrations or problems with getting their children to eat. You can provide these tips to help parents encourage their children to eat healthy food while limiting power struggles. The number one tip for working with picky eaters is to be patient. Eventually, children will begin to like more healthy foods, **as they are increasingly exposed to more foods**. In this EPress, you will learn:

- 10 tips to follow to keep picky eaters healthy
- Things to say to encourage picky eaters
- Fun ways to get children to try new foods

10 Tips for Picky Eaters

There are many different tactics parents can use to get their children to eat a more balanced diet. Below are 10 tips that parents can use to help their picky eater try new foods and stay healthy.

1. **Respect the child's appetite.** A child should never be forced or bribed to eat a certain food or finish the plate. This can ignite or reinforce a power struggle between the parent and child. In addition, children may begin to associate mealtime with anxiety and frustration. It can also lead to less sensitivity to when the child is hungry or full, which can cause serious problems later on. Instead, parents should give the child small portions and have the child ask independently for more if he or she is still hungry.
2. **Stick to a routine.** Having meals around the same time every day means the child will become hungry every day at those times. This will make it easier for parents to know if their child is a picky eater or if he or she is just not hungry. Between meals, parents can give their child water to drink to prevent him or her from becoming full on milk or sugary juices.
3. **Be patient with new foods. Many children need repeated exposure to food before they are willing to try or accept it. Children often touch or smell new foods before taking a tiny bite. Parents can encourage the child by talking about the color, shape, smell, and texture of the food. A good idea is to always serve new foods with a child's favorite food.**
4. **Recruit the child's help.** Parents can have their picky eater help pick out fruits or vegetables at the grocery store, rinse the food, stir it, and set it on the table. If children are more involved preparing the new food, they may be more willing to try it and eat it.
5. **Set a good example.** If a parent makes healthy choices, his or her child is more likely to as well. Parents can drink water, emphasize what healthy choices are, and explain the benefits of eating healthy to model healthy choices to their child.

6. **Be creative.** There are many ways parents can “sneak” nutritious foods their child says they do not like into meals. For example, chopped vegetables can easily be added to spaghetti sauce or the child’s favorite soup. Fruits can be added to cereal or made into smoothies to increase healthy eating.
7. **Minimize distractions.** Have the parent turn off the TV and put all phones and other devices away during meal times. This will help the child focus on eating.
8. **Don’t offer dessert as a reward.** Withholding dessert indicates to children that it is a prize to look forward to, often giving children a desire for more sweets. Parents should not bribe children to finish their meal to be able to have dessert. Instead, families can have dessert only on certain nights of the week or keep it for special occasions. Dessert can also be easily re-defined as healthy choices like fruit and yogurt.



9. **Limit special meal preparation.** If the child doesn’t like the meal that is prepared, parents should not make a “special” meal unless dietary restrictions exist. Special meals promote picky eating. Instead, parents can have the child stay at the table during the entire meal time. Parents should always have at least one food option available during meals that they are sure the child enjoys. If parents keep serving healthy choices, the child will eventually become familiar to the food.
10. **Take advantage of meals the child likes.** Foods that are healthy and nutritious that the child likes should be taken advantage of. For instance, if the child loves eggs, but doesn’t like chicken, parents can serve them eggs frequently so that he or she gets enough protein. If there is a particular veggie or fruit the child likes, parents can offer it to her or him daily.

What to Say to Encourage Picky Eaters

What a parent says to their child can have a long term impact on his or her eating attitudes and behaviors. When speaking to children about healthy eating, parents should choose:

- Expressions that help point out the sensory qualities of food like, "This kiwi fruit is sweet like strawberry." or "These radishes are very crunchy!" These statements encourage children to try new foods.
- Statements that help children recognize when he or she is full such as, "Is your stomach telling you that you're full?", "Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?", or "Has your tummy had enough?" These statements can help prevent overeating.



- Language choices that make the child feel like he or she is making the choices including, "Do you like that?", "Which one is your favorite?", and "Everyone likes different foods, don't they?" These statements shift the focus toward the taste of food and away from conflict around food choices.

There are also phrases or things parents can say that can lead to bribing or eating for approval. These statements can lead to unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. Parents should avoid using:

- Statements that teach children to eat for approval such as, "Eat that for me", or "If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad." This can lead to children learning unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and themselves.
- Statements that encourage children to ignore signs of fullness like, "You're such a big girl; you finished all your peas", "Look at your sister. She ate all of her broccoli", or "You have to take one more bite before you leave the table."
- Language choices that imply a child was wrong to refuse a food, such as "See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?", as these statements can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or a child's self-concept.
- Communication methods that make some foods seem like a comfort, including, "Stop crying, and I will give you a cookie." Receiving a treat when upset teaches

the child to eat to feel better, and this can cause overeating as a child and into adulthood.

- Assertions that make food seem like a reward or like they are better than other foods such as, "No dessert until you eat your vegetables." A better way to encourage children to keep trying vegetables might be saying, "We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to eat them raw instead of cooked?"

Make it Fun!

There are many ways parents can incorporate fun into healthy eating. Examples include:

- Serving veggies with the child's favorite dip or sauce
- Cutting food into fun shapes
- Having breakfast foods for dinner
- Having bright foods during each meal

One thing parents can try is the "Eat the Rainbow" activity. Attached is a sheet with different fruits and vegetables into color categories. Have the child pick one food from each color to eat that day. This gives children a choice and makes it fun to pick foods in the rainbow!

Conclusion

Many parents struggle trying to get their children to eat healthy and maintain balanced diets. As a supervised visitation provider, you can provide parents with the suggestions above to help them overcome this frustrating stage in their child's life. If parents are still concerned that their child's picky eating is compromising their growth or development, have them consult a doctor. Parents can also record the types and amounts of food their child eats for several days, and hopefully, see the big picture and ease their worries. Remember, patience is key for introducing new and healthier foods into a child's diet.

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http://www.cloudywithachanceofwine.com/10-effective-tips-for-dealing-with-a-picky-eater/#_a5y_p=2654554

<http://growingupgabel.com/healthy-eating-picky-eater/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/childrens-health/in-depth/childrens-health/art-20044948?pg=2>

<http://www.eatright.org/kids/article.aspx?id=6442467922>

Eat the Rainbow

Red **Orange** **Yellow** **Green** **Violet**



The Effects of Yelling On Children

By Cristina Batista



Parents at supervised visitation often need help improving their parenting skills.

It is easy to see why parents would turn to yelling, shouting, or screaming when trying to get the attention of their child or trying to gain control of a chaotic situation. For many parents, yelling is a proven way to assert authority and get their child's attention because parents are bigger and louder (and have more authority) than their children. Many parents, though, are unaware of the **short-term and life-long negative effects** yelling can have on a child.

Objective

The purpose of this article is to provide information about the effects of yelling as a way to modify undesirable behavior in children. The article also offers alternatives for parents who wish to use healthier options for disciplining their children. No matter what their style of discipline looks like, all parents can use more information on the consequences yelling has on their family.

Reasons Behind Yelling

Usually, a parent yells at his or her child as the result of some act of disobedience. When children are misbehaving or neglecting what they have been asked to do, it is natural for a parent to become frustrated. Parents may reach the point where they feel they have no other alternative but to yell at their child. For some parents, yelling is the first response, while for others it takes a little longer to get there.

Expectations

Parents should make sure that the expectations they have for their child are age-appropriate and clearly communicated. Sometimes it may be as simple as reevaluating whether the child can truly handle and fully understand what is being asked of him or her. Social service providers can help parents understand that children, even those who are the best behaved, cannot be expected to behave well all the time. In fact, misbehavior is something that children learn from; however, shouting has not been proven to be an effective teaching tool.

Reality

Studies have shown that yelling does not necessarily increase understanding of obedience but instead causes resentment and fear. Other studies have found that yelling often causes a child to be confused because the child internalizes the parent's anger more than the parent realizes. The child, especially if he or she is young, will first believe he or she deserves the yelling and anger, instead of thinking about the action that provoked the yelling.



This can lead to the child perceiving a threat on his or her safety and self-confidence. Instead of listening to what is being shouted, the child is too busy trying to ensure protection from a perceived or real danger. This can cause the child to become closed off, entirely missing the reason behind the yelling and often repeating the same undesired behavior at a later point in time.

Words Matter

Along with registering a loud voice, the child will also be affected by the words the parent chooses to use during the yelling. If the words are constantly insulting, sarcastic, or critical, the child can suffer extremely negative emotional consequences. Rather than using words that attack the child's character, **a parent can use "I" statements** and words like "upset" or "disappointed" or "sad."

Example:

Instead of: You are a bad boy Tommy!
You did not do what you were supposed to!

Try: Tommy, Daddy is upset because you did not put your toys away. Remember, I asked you to this morning.

In the first example, the father is attacking the qualities of the child and not being specific about what behavior was wrong. In the second example, the father is letting his child know how the misbehavior negatively affected him and clearly stating what was done wrong. The father is not yelling or attacking, but giving his child a chance to think about what was expected, how the expectation was not met, and how it made his father feel.

Negative Impacts

It has been found that long-term exposure to yelling or screaming can result in life-long issues with stress management, anxiety, developmental delays, social and emotional difficulties, poor coping skills, behavioral and academic problems, and insomnia. Parents should consider these negative impacts before incorporating yelling, shouting, or screaming into their daily discipline routines.

The Cycle of Yelling

If a child is using disrespect, rudeness, or yelling to get a rouse out of parents, parents should consider alternatives to yelling in their discipline techniques. Children learn how to communicate with others by watching their parents, and many children learn how to cope with situations by modeling what they have seen through their parents' actions. If

they are constantly seeing that negative situations are being handled with anger, harmful words, and/or shouting, children may come to see those reactions as the right or normal way to respond.

Alternatives to Yelling



In order for parents to maintain and create healthier relationships with their children, they may want to consider finding alternatives to yelling. Here are some tips to help develop healthier discipline techniques:

- **Plan ahead.** Parents should remember that children take more time than adults to start and complete activities, like getting ready or putting away toys. If a parent is on a schedule, it may be helpful for him or her to get ready and prepare beforehand, so that he or she can have time to assist the child afterwards. It is also good to give the child reminders of how much time is left before the family needs to leave.
- **Adjust expectations.** Parents are the best at knowing what their child can handle, so it is good for them to keep expectations at or just above the child's

ability. For example, a parent might realize that her five-year-old cannot perfectly line up his toys on the shelf, but he can at least get them off the floor. The mother can then set the new rules based on what her child can do. Setting new goals along the way can help a child feel more accomplished when doing chores. Parents should also try not to treat all of their children the same, especially if there are differences in age and/or abilities.

- **Be a role model.** Children learn how to communicate from their parents, so parents should remind themselves to model respectful words and tone of voice. One thing parents can try is silently repeating what they say when they yell at their child (“What is wrong with you?!”) and then imagining how they would feel if their child said the same to them or another person.
- **Give fair warning.** Sometimes parents cannot completely suppress the urge to yell, but if they know they are about to lose control, they can communicate that to their kids. One way to avoid exploding in anger during discipline is for parents to tell their child that they are upset and give him or her permission to leave the room. This can help teach a child personal responsibility for words and actions, because it shows them that all people have strong emotions from time to time, but that they still have to respect others’ feelings.
- **Listen and ask questions.** Parents should take the time to find out why a child has not done a task that was asked of them. If the child has the chance to explain the situation, the parent may realize that the task was too complex for the child, the child did not have enough time, or the child did not fully understand what was asked of him or her. If the child was simply being disobedient, he or she will better recognize what was done wrong when asked to explain it out loud, rather than through a parent shouting about the problem.
- **Refocus.** Parents should have strategies and/or items around the house that help them to remain calm. Examples of this could be picking up a tension ball, chewing a stick of gum, or looking at a favorite family photo whenever a parent feels the urge to yell. Engaging in calming activities like these, along with taking deep breaths, can help the parent lessen their desire to yell and regain control of the situation.
- **Keep the volume low at all times.** If a parent has been practicing this, it will help him or her remember to remain calm in stressful situations with a child. Parents can challenge themselves to speak to family members only when they’re in the same room. This will help keep a parent from yelling simple commands to a child who might be too young to understand that the yelling is not negatively motivated (like when “Dinner’s ready!” is yelled through the house). If the child does not comply the first time the parent makes a request, the parent should walk over to the child, get his or her attention, maintain eye contact, and speak firmly but gently. Whispering is another good technique for parents to use

because it can help diffuse the situation while forcing the child to pay closer attention.

- **Think like a teacher.** Most teachers do not take children's misbehavior personally but choose to look at it as a learning opportunity instead. **When a child misbehaves, a good question for parents to ask themselves is "What does he or she need to learn and how can I teach him or her that?"** This new perspective reduces the tension the child and parent may be feeling in the situation and helps to effectively correct the behavior. Once the parent knows what the child needs to learn, he or she can give better directions to their child the next time.
- **Imagine an audience.** Individuals **are typically on their best behavior when they think another person is watching, especially if they value that person's opinion.** When a parent is shouting, or about to shout at his or her child, it may be beneficial to picture a best friend, boss, or mentor in the same room. Parents often feel less inclined to engage in yelling and instead attempt to portray their best self.

Conclusion

Social service providers should encourage parents to keep finding new ways to engage with their children when disciplining them. Parents should understand not to take it personally when children misbehave, because children are still learning and growing. When parents choose arguments and issues carefully, they can learn how to better teach and respond to their children. Parents should know that it is perfectly okay to ask for help from other family members, friends, and professionals if they find themselves struggling with limiting yelling in their discipline. As parents gain more information on how to better discipline their children, they can gain more confidence in their healthy family relationships.

Watch this Video to see how adult anger affects them:

Watch What Really Happens When Toddlers See You Angry:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/10/toddlers-angry-behave-study-video_n_5959482.html

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Communication

By Kayla Kirk



Introduction

Communication in any relationship is very important. Communication can sometimes be difficult, especially within a complicated conversation or when put in a vulnerable position. Communication skills are crucial to building positive relationships and to maintain healthy family dynamics.

Why is effective communication important?

To create a successful relationship, communication that is both peaceful and consistent must be established. Effective communication takes a deeper level of understanding than just exchanging information; it's about identifying and relating to the emotion portrayed behind the information. It utilizes a wide range of skills that include utilizing active listening, "I" statements, and nonverbal communication, managing stress in

situations and understanding your own emotions, as well as those of the individual you are relating to.

What can it help accomplish?

Effective communication can help you to

- 1) Better understand other perspectives
- 2) Resolve conflicts
- 3) Build respect and trust
- 4) Create an environment that supports new ideas and problem solving

Tips for Effective Communication

In order for communication to be effective, it needs to be done in a healthy manner. Some healthy communication strategies include:

Before communication:

- Start by creating a positive mindset towards the situation. Give your communication a purpose.
- Ask yourself how this talk will affect your relationship with the other person. Use the possible benefits and consequences to help you decide how you would like to act during the conversation.
- Accept that you only have control over your own words and actions. Develop lines that if crossed, will cause you to leave the situation-remember that safety is still the biggest priority.
- Don't dwell on past behaviors or events. This will only prolong the pain or fighting. Focus on the present, the future, and the positive.
- Determine what form of communication works best for you.
 - Text messages, phone calls, emails, and in-person contact are all ways of communicating directly.



During communication:

- Pick a focus for the conversation. Focus the conversation on the future and present, not the past.
- Set a business-like tone. Approach the relationship as you would a colleague, with respect and neutrality.
- Make requests, not statements or demands. Start phrases with “Would you be willing to...?” or “Could we try...?”
This can help the other person feel respected and will likely lead to more positive responses.
- Listen.
Communicating on an adult level starts with real listening. This can show respect, without the need for agreeing with the other person.
- Control your reactions. The other person may respond in a way you were not expecting. Do not lash out or act aggressively if they reply differently from what you expect.
- Communicate directly. Sending messages through another person can hurt your current relationship or the message could become skewed.



Communication Blockers to Avoid:

- “Why” questions-They tend to make people defensive.
- Quick reassurances, like “Don’t worry about that.”
- Advising: “I think the best thing for you to do is...”
- Digging for information or forcing a topic
- Patronizing “You poor thing, I know just how you feel.”
- Preaching: “You should...”
- Interrupting- This shows you are not interested.

What are the strategies used to ensure effective communication?

Strategy #1: Active Listening

Successful listening involves understanding how the speaker feels about what they are communicating, not just the words they are saying. Active listening involves re-stating or paraphrasing what you hear to confirm that you've heard, fostering understanding between both parties.

Active listening is important because it can:



1) Make the speaker feel heard and understood, fostering a stronger connection

2) Create an environment in which everyone feels safe to express ideas, opinions, and feelings

3) Save time by helping clarify information, therefore avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings

4) Relieve negative emotions. If one party has negative emotions when entering a conversation, but feels heard, it can help calm him or her down and allow for problem-

solving to occur.

How to Listen Effectively:

1) Remove as many barriers to listening as possible, by turning off the TV or putting away phones. Listening barriers can be psychological, like emotions, or physical, such as noise or visual distractions. Barriers can include distractions, trigger words, vocabulary differences, and limited attention spans.

- One common barrier to listening is the shift response, or the tendency of listeners to turn the topic of conversation to themselves without showing sustained interest in the other person's listening. This often occurs when listeners are thinking of what they are about to say next while the speaker is talking, rather than truly listening to the speaker in the moment.

2) Put your full focus on the speaker. Face the speaker, sit up straight or lean forward slightly to portray attentiveness, and maintain eye contact

3) Avoid interrupting or redirecting the conversation to your own concerns. Truly focus in the moment on what the speaker is saying.

4) Show your interest. Respond appropriately, verbally and nonverbally. Use encouraging “mhmm” or “okay” responses, nod, raise eyebrows and use prompts, such as, “What did you do then?” to encourage the speaker.

5) Focus solely on what the speaker is saying. Attempt not to think of what you will say next. The conversation will flow more naturally.

6) Minimize internal distractions. Try to let go of your distracting thoughts and continuously re-focus your attention to the speaker.

Common Methods to Employ Active Listening:

Method	Description	Example
<u>Restating</u>	Paraphrase the speaker’s point to make sure you understand.	“So you’re saying…”
<u>Summarizing</u>	Bring together separate pieces of a story or problem and check that you are connecting them correctly.	“So it sounds to me as if…”
<u>Minimal encouragers</u>	Use brief, positive prompts to keep the conversation going and to show you are listening.	“Oh?”, “I understand.”, or “Mhmm”
<u>Reflecting</u>	Reflect the speaker’s words in terms of feelings.	“This seems really important to you.”
<u>Probing</u>	Ask questions to get deeper insight and get involved in the conversation.	“What do you think would happen if you…?”
<u>Validation</u>	Acknowledge the individual’s problems, issues, and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy.	“I appreciate your willingness to discuss…”
<u>Using “I” Statements</u>	“I” statements help you to focus on the problem, not the person involved in a negative situation. They	“I know you have a lot to say, but I need to…”

	help let the other person know what you feel and why.	
<u>Redirecting</u>	If the speaker shows signs of being overly aggressive, agitated, or angry, this is the time to shift the discussion to another topic.	“Let’s continue this talk later.”

Strategy #2: Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication involves nonverbal cues that signal the way a person feels about a conversation or person. Nonverbal communication is so important because it can relay information, such as emotions or biases, which can change the context and meaning of a conversation. Nonverbal methods of communication can include body language, facial expressions, body movement, gestures, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, muscle tension, and even breathing.

Nonverbal communication can help you:

- Better connect within a conversation
- Express what you really mean, avoiding confusion
- Navigate challenging situations
- Build a better relationship

Tips for Employing Nonverbal Communication:

- 1) Use nonverbal signals that match your words to strengthen their meaning.
- 2) Use body language to convey positive feelings (even when you are not actually experiencing them).
 - Standing tall with shoulders back, smiling, and maintaining eye contact can help you feel more confident in a conversation and put the other person at ease.

Conclusion

Communicating is a daily process. At times, communication can be difficult and stressful. Using the above strategies will help you become a more effective communicator and listener. Start by employing one of these strategies to start to see changes in your daily interactions. Once you feel comfortable with the first strategy you choose, build on this skill by adding the second strategy to communicate in a more effective, healthy way in all your relationships.

Conflict Resolution

By Kayla Kirk

Introduction

Conflict resolution is a crucial skill to have, as conflicts are bound to occur. Conflicts can occur with your significant other, children, friends, or co-workers. Resolving conflicts can be difficult, but this skill provides a chance for you to effectively problem solve and react to conflict in a positive manner.

Why is effective conflict resolution important?

Every one eventually encounters conflict. Conflicts arise on varying topics, including money, children, in-laws, expectations, job duties, etc. How these conflicts are handled determines the outcome of the conflict. If handled well, issues can provide opportunities for personal growth, as well as a chance to strengthen the relationship. There are specific strategies that you can use to resolve conflict in a healthy, effective manner.



What can it help accomplish?

Effective conflict resolution can help you to

- 1) Problem solve difficult scenarios that otherwise may have become roadblocks.
- 2) Build a more effective and cohesive relationship with your significant other, friends, or co-workers.
- 3) Maintain a healthy emotional stability within your life due to decreased conflict.

Tips to Resolve Conflict

Conflict resolution is an integral part of any relationship, as it allows for connection to continue. Some healthy conflict resolution strategies include:

- Try to remain calm throughout the conversation and avoid intense reactions.
 - If you become upset, the conversation may lose its focus and the conflict will escalate.

- Look into alternative communication methods.
 - If during a conflict it's very difficult to communicate in person, try communicating through email or another means.
- Don't expect apologies or remorse.
 - When in conflict, don't expect an apology. The focus needs to be on communicating. Focus on furthering communication in a civil manner, not getting an apology.
- Start with the positive.
 - If you know that a difficult subject has to be discussed, start the conversation with a positive, such as expressing appreciation or chit-chatting about the day's events.



- Focus on one problem at a time.
 - Pick one issue to target at a time, and try your best not to tangent off into other issues. This can help to ensure that the issue remains the focus, allowing the best chance for successfully finding an

appropriate solution. Added attacks or bringing up past issues can hinder the problem solving approach altogether.

- Attempt to repair communication.
 - Mistakes are bound to be made during conflict resolution, but how you react following a communication mistake will determine how the conversation will go. Taking responsibility for an interaction turning negative and attempting to calm the situation can help prevent further negativity. Take time away from the situation if needed.

Common Sources of Conflict

Below are common sources of conflict that you may experience:

- Money/finances
- Raising/disciplining children
- Boundaries in a relationship
- Workplace personalities
- Group projects

What are the strategies used to ensure effective conflict resolution?

Strategy #1: Active Listening for Conflict Resolution

Active listening is important in all forms of communication, but specific listening tactics can encourage resolution of conflicts in a peaceful, supportive way.

Active listening during conflict resolution can help you:

- Stop arguments and defuse strong emotions
- Show respect to the other person, making them feel heard
- Provide more opportunities for the other person to listen to you
- Problem-solve difficult scenarios
- Build a more effective and cohesive relationship

Active Listening Skills to Employ in Conflict Resolution

When in the role of Speaker:

1) Share your own thoughts, feelings, and opinions on issues, rather than attempting to claim what the listener is feeling or thinking.

2) Use “I” statements to express your thoughts, rather than attacking or accusing the listener.

3) Keep statements concise and simple, instead of overwhelming the listener with too much information at once.

4) Stop often during communication, to allow the listener to paraphrase your thoughts and get a clear picture of your concerns.



When in the role of Listener:

- 1) Paraphrase what the speaker is saying, ask for clarification, and make sure you are both on the same page with the information at hand.
- 2) Restrain from giving your own opinions while the speaker talks, allowing for the speaker to paint a full picture of his or her side, before giving your thoughts.
- 3) Limit interruptions, other than to paraphrase, to show respect for the speaker and his or her concerns.

Overall, active listening can ensure that you are giving the other person a fair chance to have successful communication with you about a conflict. It allows for compromises to occur by limiting negative energy and creating a supportive line of communication that is safe and comfortable. By using active listening skills, you are encouraging the other person to communicate positively with you.

Strategy #2: Managing Situational Stress

Stress can hamper effective communication and lead to conflicts arising by disrupting your capacity to think rationally; and therefore, act appropriately. When you are stressed, you are more likely to misread other people's communication efforts, send confusing signals, and lapse into unhealthy patterns of behavior. Managing the stress that arises in complicated or intimidating situations can allow for healthy communication to exist.

Managing situational stress can help you:

- Avoid regretful responses
- Be confident in your own capabilities, no matter what situation arises
- Make opportunities for more positive exchanges

Tips for Managing Situational Stress:

1) Recognize when you are becoming stressed or conflict is arising. Start to become aware of the personal effects you experience when you become stressed, such as biting your nails or developing a headache. Also look out for physical responses that all people experience during stress, such as tightening of muscles, clenching of hands, breathing shallow, or forgetting to breathe.



2) Take a moment to calm down. Count to ten and then make a rational decision on whether to stop the conversation or continue on.

3) Use your senses. Find what soothes you, such as taking a few deep breaths, clenching and relaxing muscles, recalling a soothing image, or listening to relaxing music.

4) Be willing to compromise. Relationships and communication is all about compromising. Accepting that the end result of the conversation will most likely not be 100% ideal will help you accept the healthy compromise that both of you can accept and live with.

5) Agree to disagree. If no compromise can be reached, take time away from the situation and return to it at a later date.

Strategy #3: Emotional Awareness

Being out of touch with your personal feelings can lead to frustration, misunderstandings, and conflict in your communication and relationships. If you are unaware of your own emotions, how will someone else be able to pick up on your emotions through your communication efforts?

The ability to communicate depends on a conscious connection to your emotional experience in the moment and your ability to manage all of your feelings appropriately.

Emotional awareness can help you:

- Recognize and control your emotional stress
- Understand and empathize with your others
- Understand yourself, including what you are struggling with and what you desire
- Stay motivated to understand and empathize with others, even if you do not agree with their messages
- Communicate negative messages clearly and effectively

- Build strong, trusting, and rewarding relationships, in which creative thinking, problem solving, and conflict resolution prosper

How to Develop a Strong Emotional Connection

You can learn to hone your emotions in a positive way. It takes time and practice but can help you reconnect with your feelings and control them during communication efforts, leading to the development of strong communication skills and lasting relationships. Read on to discover the steps to developing a strong emotional connection.

Step 1: Identify your emotions. Emotions involve thoughts, your body's physical response, and your behaviors. The thoughts you may have can involve ideas or images that pop into your head. For example, you may begin to focus on a sad idea or see a disturbing image that caused the emotion. Your body's physical response can include changes such as an increased heart rate or feeling nauseous. Behaviors involve what you feel an urge to do when you experience a certain emotion, such as crying. Once you have an understanding of what makes up typical emotional responses, you can begin to see emotional patterns in your own life.

Step 2: Monitor your emotions. Start to become aware of your personal emotional responses to different types of situation. Become mindful of when you feel strong emotions, including sadness, fear, guilt, or anger. When you are in an overwhelming emotional situation, ask yourself:

- What type of emotional and physical responses am I having?
- What triggered these feelings?
- What could help me cope with these feelings?

You will start to see typical responses to emotions and situations emerge. This can help you quickly identify when these emotions arise, allowing you to deal with them before they become overwhelming. Next, we will go over methods to healthily cope with your emotional responses.

Step 3: Develop healthy coping methods. Different coping methods will work for contrasting emotions, as well as varying types of people. For example, expressive writing would relate to some people experiencing sadness, while taking time away from the situation could help with anger. In some instances, such as at work, you may not be able to readily employ these strategies, so find what works for you as an individual.

Healthy Coping Methods:

Coping Method	How it Helps	Examples
<u>Relaxation</u>	Relaxation can help slow your breathing rate, relax your muscles, and reduce blood pressure, limiting the harmful effects of stress.	This can involve simply breathing slowly, meditation, yoga, or resting in a quiet space.
<u>Physical Recreation</u>	Exercise has been proven to be a helpful de-stressor for many people and can help you sort out your emotions. The endorphins you feel will also help to give you a more positive outlook on life.	Go for a run, join a sports team, stretch, or find a yoga class to plug into.
<u>Writing</u>	Journaling your feelings and thoughts can be a healthy release from the situation at hand. It can give you a new perspective on the situation that you may not have had before.	Start a new journal, create a blog, or write notes to a loved one about your struggles.
<u>Healthy Distractions</u>	Engaging in a healthy distraction can help provide a break to reevaluate the conflict, but remember to evaluate what triggered your emotional response later on.	Read a book, take a bath, or watch a movie to relax and give your mind a breather.
<u>Reach Out</u>	Seeking support can help you identify and manage your emotions, while feeling a boost in self-assurance.	This can mean simply talking to a friend, taking the step to join a support group, or reaching out for professional help.

Conclusion

Being able to solve conflicts efficiently and positively is an important skill to have. The strategies provided can give ideas on how to communicate effectively and stop a conflict from getting out of hand or becoming too negative. Conflict resolution strategies can be used in a multitude of situations with anyone; therefore, it is a crucial thing to understand. This information can be used by supervised visitation providers and parents to increase their conflict resolution and communication skills.

Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vav5uZIN-AE>

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