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Our Team

FAMILY MATTERS



COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR PARENTS

By: Sheri Fluellen

Parents, you live in your house with the rest of your family members and talk to your kids every day. So why is it that it seems like you are speaking a different lan-

guage or that what you say just isn't heard?

Here are some important yet easy tips on how to improve your communication as parents (1).

~ Never stop learning and trying to make improvements!! ~

Be available for your children

- Notice times when your kids are most likely to talk--for example, at bedtime, before dinner, in the car--and be available.
- Start the conversation; it lets your kids know you care about what's happening in their lives.
- Find time each week for a one-on-one activity with each child, and avoid scheduling other activities during that time.
- Learn about your children's interests--for example, favorite music and activities--and show interest in them.
- Initiate conversations by sharing what you have been thinking about rather than beginning a conversation with a question.

Let your kids know you're listening

- When your children are talking about concerns, stop whatever you are doing and listen.

- Express interest in what they are saying without being intrusive.
- Listen to their point of view, even if it's difficult to hear.
- Let them complete their point before you respond.
- Repeat what you heard them say to ensure that you understand them correctly.

Respond so your children will hear

- Soften strong reactions; kids will often tune you out if you appear angry or defensive.
- Express your opinion without putting down theirs; acknowledge that it's okay to disagree.
- Resist arguing about who is right. Instead say, "I know you disagree with me, but this is what I think."
- Focus on your child's feelings rather than your own during your conversation.

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IN NEXT ISSUE:

The Pursuit of Happiness

What it takes to be happy, but should you even try?



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"The homemaker has the ultimate career. All other careers exist for one purpose only - and that is to support the ultimate career." C.S. Lewis

GAMES

BY: LINDA MALM

Zunga has found that people play games for one of 3 reasons: 1.

Achievers play because they want to win.

Maxers play because they want to build the biggest or amass the most.

Decorators play they like to create a world, and fill it with things they design, and share it with others. (2)

Are games just for fun or is there a benefit to the fun?

Zunga, the fastest growing social gaming company in history, says good games have four things in common: a clear goal, rules, feedback, and voluntary participation. Games make us happy because we are working toward goals, and by mastering obstacles, we feel a sense of accomplishment. Success releases

adrenaline and dopamine that makes us feel exhilarated and resilient. The effect is even more powerful when we play games in groups. By achieving goals with others, our bodies generate additional chemicals which include oxytocin, deepening our connection to those we're playing with.

In 2009, researchers from eight universities in the United States and Asia studied the effects of games that require "helpful behavior". All of the studies concluded that

the more time young people spend helping others in games, the more time they spent helping friends and family members in real life. Isn't this a really good reason to figure out how to start adding games as a staple to your family time? (2)



Families that play together stay together!

4 Don'ts of Gratitude

A healthy family is one that doesn't routinely take the other family members for granted.

One way of hedging against bitterness and complacency is to develop a sense of gratitude. Here are some tips.

- 1. Don't mistake gratitude for an IOU.** You shouldn't feel obligated to repay a favor. In close relationships, this sort of tit for tat can actually foster negative feelings between partners, and quick "repayment" may signal a discomfort with or avoidance of intimacy and trust.
- 2. Don't overdose on gratitude.** Express thanks—but not excessively. In a study of gratitude journaling, people who tracked their gratitude once per week reported increased happiness; those who tracked their gratitude three times per week did not. Running out of real things to write may, counterproductively, make people feel they don't have that much to be grateful for.
- 3. Don't sell yourself short.** When you achieve success, thank the people who helped get you there. But give yourself some credit, too. If you thank everyone else while downplaying your own hard work and talent, you may be mistaking low self-esteem for gratefulness.
- 4. Don't always "be thankful for what you have".** Concentrating on what you should be thankful for might mean you're glossing over red flags. In one study of romantic couples, expressing anger about a serious problem was more beneficial—and more likely to lead to a real resolution—than just being positive. (3)

Gratitude
is not only the greatest of virtues,
but the parent of all others.
- Cicero



Sibling Wisdom

Family Eating

Research has shown that just eating together as a family can improve children's nutritional health. In families who shared at least three meals a week, children were 24 percent more likely to be eating healthy foods than those in families who ate few or no meals together. The children were also 12 percent less likely to be overweight, 20 percent less likely to eat unhealthy foods and 35 percent less likely to engage in dangerous weight-loss efforts like purging, taking diet pills and laxatives, or vomiting. (4)

I ♥ my family

Resiliency: for you, for your kids

who
crave
struc-

Building resilience — the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress — can help our children manage stress and feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. However, being resilient does not mean that children won't experience difficulty or distress. Here are some things to consider.

Make connections. Teach your child how to make friends, including the skill of empathy, or feeling another's pain. Build a strong family network to support your child through inevitable disappointments and hurts. Watch to make sure that your child is not being isolated. Many find comfort in connecting with a higher power, and it would be wise to introduce your child to your own traditions of worship.

Help your child by having him or her help others. Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Engage your child in age-appropriate volunteer work, or ask for assistance yourself with some task that he or she can master. At school, brainstorm with children about ways they can help others.

Maintain a daily routine. Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children

in their lives. Encourage your child to develop his or her own routines.

Take a break. While it is important to stick to routines, endlessly worrying can be counter-productive. Teach your child how to focus on something besides what's worrying him. Build in unstructured time during the day to be creative.

Teach your child self-care. Make yourself a good example, and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise and rest. Make sure your child has time to have fun, and make sure that your child hasn't scheduled every moment of his or her life with no "down time" to relax.

Move toward your goals. Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step at a time. Praise child on what he/she has accomplished rather than on what hasn't been accomplished. Break down large assignments into small, achievable goals for younger children, and for older children, acknowledge accomplishments on the way to larger goals.

Nurture a positive self-view. Help your child remember ways that he or she has successfully handled hardships in the past and then help him understand that these past challenges help him build the strength to handle future challenges. Help your child learn to trust himself to

solve problems and make appropriate decisions. Teach your child the ability to laugh at one's self. At school, help children see how their individuality contributes to the wellbeing of the whole class.

Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook. Even when your child is facing very painful events, help him look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. An optimistic and positive outlook enables your child to see the good things in life and keep going even in the hardest times. In school, use history to show that life moves on after bad events.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery. Tough times are often the times when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever he is facing can teach him "what he is made of." At school, consider leading discussions of what each student has learned after facing down a tough situation.

Accept that change is part of living. Change often can be scary for children/teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable. In school, point out how students have changed as they moved up in grade levels and discuss how that change has had an impact on the students. (5)

.62 Distance from home, in miles, at which point people's tweets begin declining in expressed happiness (about the distance expected for a short work commute)



9 Tasks For a Good Marriage

Research on what makes a marriage work shows that people in a good marriage have completed these psychological "tasks":

1. Separate emotionally from the family you grew up in; not to the point of estrangement, but enough so that your identity is separate from that of your parents and siblings.
2. Build togetherness based on a shared intimacy and identity, while at the same time set

boundaries to protect each partner's autonomy.

3. Establish a rich and pleasurable sexual relationship and protect it from the intrusions of the workplace and family obligations.
4. For couples with children, embrace the daunting roles of parenthood and absorb the impact of a baby's entrance into the marriage. Learn to continue the work of protecting the privacy of you and your spouse as a couple.
5. Confront and master the inevitable crises of life.
6. Maintain the strength of the marital

bond in the face of adversity. The marriage should be a safe haven in which partners are able to express their differences, anger and conflict.

7. Use humor and laughter to keep things in perspective and to avoid boredom and isolation.
8. Nurture and comfort each other, satisfying each partner's needs for dependency and offering continuing encouragement and support.
9. Keep alive the early romantic, idealized images of falling in love, while facing the sober realities of the changes wrought by time. (6)

Parent Communication (continued)

Remember:

- Ask your children what they may want or need from you in a conversation, such as advice, simply listening, help in dealing with feelings, or help solving a problem.
- Kids learn by imitating. Most often, they will follow your lead in how they deal with anger, solve problems, and work through difficult feelings.
- Talk to your children--don't lecture, criticize, threaten, or say hurtful things.
- Kids learn from their own choices. As long as the consequences are not dangerous, don't feel you have to step in.
- Realize your children may test you by telling you a small part of what is bothering them. Listen carefully to what they say, encourage them to talk, and they may share the rest of the story.



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"Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city" - George Burns

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