Communicating with Younger Children
From Toddlers to Pre-teens

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Agenda
▪ Communication matters
▪ Stages of communication
▪ Choosing time and place
▪ Listening
▪ Repeat, restate, reflect
▪ Body language
▪ Don’t jump to judgment
▪ How to get children to open up
▪ Feelings
▪ Humor

Learning Points
▪ Understanding the importance of good communication
▪ Identifying the expected stages of development in communication
▪ Learning the variables that make good communication skills with children
▪ Learning the role feelings, emotions and humor play in communicating with children
Communication Matters

- Enhances relationship with your children
- Helps them share feelings
- Develops language and vocabulary

Stages of Communication

- Under 1 year: React to sounds, learn to identify things with single words
- 1-2 years: Use gestures and up to 20 simple words, understand simple instructions
- 2-3 years: Can make short sentences - become more sociable
- 3-4 years: Ask many questions - intense period of learning

Stages of Communication

- 4-5 years: Start to learn to listen to instructions, communicate with others in preparation for school, learn to communicate with non-family members
- 5-7 years: Able to share opinions and ideas
- 7-11 years: More complex sentences, draw conclusions, converse with adults and new people more confidently
Choose Right Place and Time

- If emotions are high give yourself and them time to calm down
- Avoid having serious discussions in public or in front of their friends
- Taking a walk or sitting together in a non-threatening way can help make a connection
- For older children a car ride can be a great time to talk
- Know when to stop talking

Effective Listening

- Hearing is not “listening”
- Don’t multitask
- Make sure you can give your undivided attention
- Use eye contact
- Check in often, even if there is not a problem

Repeat, Restate, Reflect

- Repeat what you think they are saying
- Be patient
- Learn their language
- Give them an out if they agree to be honest
- Reinforce the positive
- Focus on behaviors not character
  - “I am disappointed” vs. “You are a bad child”
Helping Them Develop Language Skills

- Use words and language correctly
- Avoid slang and “baby talk” past infancy
- Grow vocabulary by using “big” words appropriately
- Grammar is first learned from what is heard and spoken at home well before children learn to read

Be Aware of Body Language

- We communicate by body language
- Be conscious of intimidating posture or arm crossing
- Watch facial cues, eye rolling, intonation that is dismissive
- Avoid raising your voice

Don’t Jump to Judge

- Don’t immediately correct or contradict
- Let them have their say
- Pause and think before you reply or respond, particularly if emotions are high
- Avoid making promises you cannot keep
- Include them in decisions and consequences
How to Get Them to Open Up

▪ Avoid “yes” or “no” questions; use probing questions to get more information
▪ Allow them to offer solutions and suggestions
▪ Don’t always try to “fix” the situation
▪ Help them to see and offer solutions
  o “What do you think we should do about this?”
▪ Acknowledge their feelings
▪ Ask them what they think
▪ Use supporting "I" statements
  o “I hear what you are saying.”
  o “I know that must have been hard for you.”
  o “I can see this is upsetting to you.”

Feelings are Key

▪ Let them share their feelings
▪ Teach them to express their emotions
▪ Acknowledge all feelings are normal and necessary
▪ Share your feelings as well
  o It is ok to let them know you are sad, angry, disappointed
  o “This is how I feel when I am….”

Humor

▪ Use humor appropriately to relieve tension
▪ Give lots of hugs
▪ Tell them you love them no matter what
▪ End conversations on a positive note
▪ Laugh with them not at them
Other Forms of Communication

- Leave notes and messages or text often to stay connected
- Sometimes a note or letter to an older child is a good non-confrontational way to express concern
- Use texts only for non-critical communication
- Serious issues should always be face to face

How Your EAP Can Help – If you’d like to receive more support consider contacting your EAP

- Face-to-face counseling sessions
- Legal/financial consultations
- Child/life eldercare consultation & referrals
- Daily resources
- ID theft recovery & free credit monitoring
- Nursing mother support program
- myStrength
- Member Center- Online Provider Access
- Comprehensive website New Look!!!

Call 800/999-7222
or go to our website at www.anthemeap.com
Login: CCCD

Thank you!

Questions?