

TEENS MATTER

TEENS MATTER

A PARENTING TEENS DIGEST BOONE COUNTY STEP AHEAD COUNCIL
MAY/JUNE ISSUE 2005

There is no limit to what can be done-----If it doesn't matter who gets the credit
Author: Unknown

COMMUNICATION VERBAL, NON-VERBAL AND LISTENING

Special thanks goes to Tracy Line for permission to reprint from her article "The Art of Listening" which appeared in the April 2005 issue of *Indy's Child*. Information was also obtained from the *Education Resource Information Center*. *Indy's Child* can be picked up at the 'Free Publication' racks at Marsh or LoBill.

Communication...we all use it, some better than others. A number of people make a living with written, verbal, and listening communication skills, others are not even conscious of their communication habits.

There are three main parts of communication, verbal, non-verbal and listening.

VERBAL of course relates to the way we speak or write. The most mistakes made during verbal communication are the use of the wrong word, especially ones that are not precise or strictly accurate.

NON-VERBAL communication makes up about 80% of our communication. Non-verbal communication is our actions. This can be the tone in our voice, body language, and the look on our face and can even include our handwriting. This sometimes projects more of how we feel and not what we have just said. Paying attention to the body language, tone and etc. when listening to your child or anyone can give you much more insight as to what they are really saying. So goes the saying "Actions speak louder than words." Written communication can be enhanced by ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, exclamation points!!, **bold strokes** or underlined words... all saying 'pay attention, this is important'.

The third and probably most neglected is **LISTENING**...critical listening. We are taught many things in school, but the art of really listening is something that does not come naturally. Just the act of hearing does not mean you are listening. Really listening involves sensing, interpretation, evaluation and response. Most of us fall in the 'merely hearing' category. Because we do not really listen, we respond quickly to what has been said, or are anticipating our next sentence or thought. We make assumptions of what we just heard. Sometimes the assumptions are incorrect because of inadequate information. When you are listening to someone be sure to *Focus* on the person and what they are really trying to say. Don't think ahead to your response or what you think they want to hear. Look at facial expressions, body language and not just the words. Show an interest in what that person is saying and don't walk away or turn your back on them.

Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, writes "The deepest hunger of the human heart is to be understood." Understanding says Covey, absolutely affirms and validates the intrinsic worth of a person. If our children discover we are not listening, they might infer that they are not worth listening to. By listening to your child you affirm that what he/she has to say is important. Experts agree that most important function of the family is to provide love, affection, companionship and acceptance. Trenholm and Jensen say these factors are extremely important in terms of individual self-esteem. Strength is pulled from the family and acts as a catalyst for the ability to deal with the outside world.

Some topics can be difficult to approach. Death, divorce, sex are just a few. It is easy in these conversations to become defensive or judgmental. Steve Covey believes that we must seek first to understand..then to be understood. All of us naturally view the world through our own unique eyes. Yet everyone is different, and there is no right or wrong way to perceive a situation. Covey believes that breakdowns in communication happen when people interpret events differently.

Steve Covey believes that, when necessary, we must also practice empathetic listening . This is listening with the goal of helping. When you are an empathetic listener you are not judging, criticizing or trying to influence. You listen to understand how and why someone feels the way they do. Empathetic listening isn't always easy. According to Covey, when someone talks to us our initial reaction is to evaluate, probe, advise and interpret what we've just heard. To respond in one of these ways is to analyze the situation from your point of view or perception and is not empathetic. To become an empathetic listener, you need to respect the other person's point of view, make sure you understand before responding, paraphrase what was said, and make sure you also understand what wasn't said (the emotions behind the words). There are also times when a person doesn't want you to 'solve' their problem, give them advice or tell them they are wrong in how they feel. They only want someone to listen and validate their right to feel the way they do.

We need also to be aware of our own emotions when we listen. Unfortunately emotions can get in the way of really listening or understanding. Sometimes pride strikes or tempers flare. Conversations take on a life of their own. Being hurt by something someone said is natural, but try not to take the offense. Try to stay calm and in control of the situation without hurtful words and yelling. Choosing to be angry will only hinder the relationship, so be the bigger person and forgive the offense (and the offender) and try to resolve the situation.

Almost everyone today leads very active and stressful lives, but when it comes to listening to our families, friends and everyone else we come in contact with in a days time, we need to give them our full attention and focus. Only then will we really know what they are saying. Try it for a few days and find out what you have been missing.

UPDATE ON SENATE BILL 0285

In the last issue of "*Teens Matter*" we addressed the growing problem of bullying within our school systems. I am happy to report that SB0285 passed the Senate with the following:
Digest of SB285 (Updated March 28, 2005) Bullying. Defines "bullying", and requires a school corporation to adopt rules to prohibit bullying. Allows the use of grants from the safe schools fund to provide education and training to school personnel concerning bullying, and requires the inclusion of anti-bullying training in school safety specialist education. Requires each school to establish a safe school committee.

WANTED: A MOTHER.

No previous experience necessary. Will train on the job. Must be willing to work long hours seven day a week. Must be able to clean the most awful messes. Must be able to be adaptable to perform a variety of odd jobs every day. Must be willing to work with children of all ages. Must be tactful with the adult male who tries to rule his domain from the couch while watching endless hours of sports. No over time pay. In fact salary will consist of hugs and messy kisses. Must have a loud voice that can for the tenth time kindly say, "go to your room." Must be prepared to cook at least three meals a day and 5 snacks. Must be prepared without warning to have unexpected guests for supper. Some veterinarian experience would be helpful in dealing with numerous pets. Though not necessary, a masters degree in child psychology would be helpful. Must be willing to arbitrate between waring children. Must be willing to work at this job for about 26 years. At the end of this period you may apply for the position of Grandmother. Will not be fired. But you may not under any circumstances quit. Must apply in person. Be prepared to go to work immediately. Author—unknown



To Mothers everywhere...."HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY"