Parent University:
How to Talk So Your Teen Will Listen, And
How To Listen So Your Teen Will Talk

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What is communication?
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Giving or exchanging information, transmitting a message
What is “effective” communication?
What is “effective” communication?

A clear message that is transmitted, then received, understood and elicits a response.
Barriers to effective communication:

Things that prevent the message from being transmitted or understood properly

• Listener barriers
• Speaker barriers
• Parent barriers
• Adolescent barriers
Barriers to effective communication
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- Interrupting
- Raising voice
- Offering unwanted advice
- Double-bind messages
- Distractions
- Accusations
- Comparing
- Minimizing/dismissing feelings
- Guilt-provoking statements
- Changing focus
- Top the other person’s story

- Changing the subject
- Judging
- Always/Never
- Name calling/insulting
- Lecturing
- Monotone
- Lack of empathy
- Poor eye contact
- Body language
- Taking things out of context
- Shutting down
- Unclear tone in text or e-mail messages
Strategies to promote effective communication
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- Listen without responding
- Wait your turn
- Keep an open mind
- Avoid being judgmental
- Be empathetic
- Ask open-ended questions
- Pay attention
- Remove distractions
- Agree to disagree

- Ask questions to clarify
- Paraphrase for understanding
- Try to remain calm
- Take a break if necessary
- Choose words carefully
- Listen rather than lecture
- Be a consistent, positive role model
- Be aware of non-verbal messages
Strategies to promote effective communication

- Speak respectfully, rather than using hurtful language
- Think through your response before speaking
- Bring up only relevant, rather than extraneous issues,
- Stay focused on the concern
- Hold off on issuing consequences or making threats while trying to communicate
- Use clear, rather than ambiguous language
- Validate the other person’s feelings when possible
- Use text/e-mail messages in conjunction with interpersonal communications
- Be mindful of possible misinterpretation of text/email
- Make the speaker feel heard and understood
- Problem solve in creative ways
- Create an environment where everyone feels safe to express opinions, ideas and feelings
- Use “I” statements
“I” Statements

“I feel __________ when you __________ because ____________. I would appreciate it if you would ________________.

Examples:
“I feel angry when you leave dishes in the sink because they are in my way when I make dinner. I would appreciate it if you would either wash your own dishes right away or use paper plates.”

“I feel furious when you stay out past curfew because I worry about you and I feel disrespected when you break our agreement. I would appreciate it if you came home on time so we can negotiate for a later curfew in the future.”
Technology’s role in communication with your teen

- Acknowledge & accept that this is how teens communicate
- Quick messages or reminders
- Information regarding whereabouts of teen
- Way for teen to communicate with you when in uncomfortable situations with peers
- Can be used as icebreaker/diffuse emotional moment
Caution:

• Be careful of misinterpretation (things taken out of context, can’t assess tone, no body language or facial expression to help interpret meaning)

• Minimizes personal interaction, interferes with interpersonal skill development

• May become less inhibited and say things one would not necessarily say in a face-to-face interaction

• Greater impact of message when it is written