

Sending and Receiving Messages in Communication

Avoiding Negative Signals

Avoid sending negative messages such as:

- Frequent or harsh complaints or criticism
- Demanding or controlling comments
- Name-calling or insults
- Accusing or defensive statements
- Avoiding or ignoring a person's communication

Sending Positive Messages

Family communication should include four to five positive interactions for every one negative interaction to be healthy.

Ways to send positive communication include:

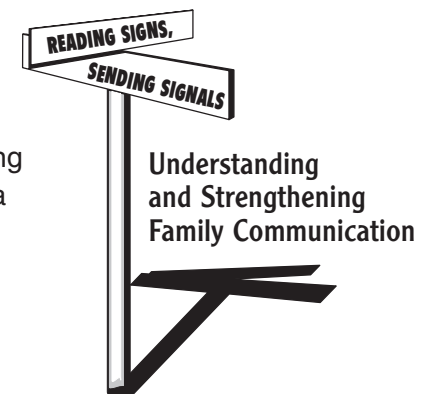
- Giving genuine praise or compliments
- Smiling or expressing verbal appreciation
- Sharing personal feelings or ideas
- Showing interest and personal support
- Being patient and kind
- Expressing affection with a hug, gift, etc.

The Art of Listening

Listening is perhaps the most important part of communication. Improvement of listening skills is a dramatic way to improve communication. Steps in the art of listening include:

- Show you are listening by facing the person, maintaining eye contact, and expressing interest in their thoughts and feelings.
- Concentrate on what the person is saying and what they are trying to communicate. Seek to understand their feelings.
- Be careful not to interrupt.
- Watch the person's body language such as facial expression, tone of voice, posture, etc.
- Actively listen and give feedback by repeating or paraphrasing what has been said. Follow up with questions or comments. This lets the person see you are listening and interested.

Listening is more than just hearing words. It is trying to understand a person's message and feelings. Good listening shows we care.



Tips for Solving Problems with Communication

Prepare Ahead of Time

- Make sure you find a good time to talk. Avoid discussing major concerns when hungry, tired, late at night, or in a hurry. Try to set a place and time of day that will be free of distractions and sufficiently private.
- Set a clear agenda. Have a clear idea of what you wish or need to discuss and avoid other topics.
- Identify the problem or issue of concern. Share your feelings about what is bothering you and why you would like to discuss it and find a solution. Be respectful of others' feelings and views.

Check Emotional Readiness

- Are you in control of yourself? Find out how you are feeling and make sure you feel emotionally ready to discuss the situation.
- Is the other person receptive? Ask yourself whether others are defensive, preoccupied, tired or ready to talk about an issue.
- Assess the level of willingness to discuss a concern and the pace at which it should proceed. Some issues take time and patience to discuss or work through.

Work Through the Issue

- Brainstorm together to find ideas and solutions to a concern. Get a variety of ideas and write them all down before beginning to make judgments.
- Decide which suggestions are most possible or desirable, then drop others off the list. Talk about the possible outcomes for each choice and the best solution.
- Share your feelings in a healthy and respectful way. Exchange ideas or preferences. Give the other person “the floor” to speak while you listen, then trade off.
- Find a solution that family members can agree on or compromise to reach a decision. Take steps to implement it.
- Set a time to follow up and evaluate the decision made and discuss how it is working.

