



Model Respectful Communication, Reduce Disrespect and Build Connection

What To Avoid:

Avoid dismissing feelings

At least it's not..." -or- "It could be worse."

I'm sorry you feel that way."

"You shouldn't let that bother you."

"Don't think about it, just get on with it."

Avoid Giving Advice, Judging, and Shaming

"Come on, cheer up! What's wrong with you? Why can't you just be happy?"

"You're too sensitive."

"Relax. You're making too big a deal out of it."

"You should do this _____."

Avoid Demands and Threats (which lead to power struggles)

“Don’t you dare speak to me that way!”

“Do you want to be grounded again or lose your phone?”

Avoid Ignoring and Giving Them The Silent Treatment

I’m not having this discussion!”

Try This Instead:

Listen and validate their feelings.

“You thought she was your friend. That must have really hurt when she left you out.”

“I get it that you’re angry and you can’t be on your phone right now. You don’t want to miss out on what your friends are talking about online.”

Share your experience and feelings

“That was a strong reaction. It surprised me.”

“I’d like to hear more about what happened. This sounds important to you.”

“I’m feeling frustrated right now.”

“That comment hurt.”

Notice without judgment what's happening, share your feelings and acknowledge their feelings

"I hear you arguing. I'm frustrated, and I think you're both frustrated too."

"I've been noticing you've been having some trouble controlling your anger."

"I'm noticing that this isn't working for me and I don't want to keep arguing with you and for us both to wind up yelling."

Notice what you see without judgment

"I noticed you didn't finish taking out the garbage."

Share your needs

"I need help right now."

Be curious and help them develop self-awareness

"I'm wondering if you're feeling sad that your friend is moving?"

"Does anyone like the way this fighting makes us feel?"

"What is most upsetting to you? Do you want to talk about it?"

Listen, validate what they're saying and set limits with compassion

"My decision has been made. And, you're allowed to disagree with me."

Ask permission before giving unsolicited advice

"Do you want to talk about it?"

“Would you like my support?”

“What do you want to do about that?”

“What do you think?”

“How do you feel about that?”

“What do you think you need?”

“How can I help?”

Make direct requests/Set expectations

“I want your room cleaned before you go to Ben’s house.”

“When your chores are done you can play your video game.”

Share what you’re noticing that is causing problems/arguments, #2 - Share what you want instead, #3 Invite them to problem-solve with you

“I’m noticing this has become an issue that is causing us to argue.”

“This has been a challenge lately. If you’re willing to share, I’d like to know what’s going on.”

“What I want is to talk about this so we can have more of an understanding of how we’re both feeling and what’s happening.”

“I’d like to discuss how we might come up with a solution/compromise.”

Brainstorm Solutions

“Do you have some ideas about how we can work this out?”

“What do you think we could do differently?”

“What do you think is fair?”

Help them to regulate their emotions

When you start to feel frustrated due to your kid's behavior, remember this phrase: "He's not giving me a hard time, he's having a hard time."

Things you can say...

"How you feel is important to me. I want to listen to how you're feeling and what's going on that is causing you to be upset."

"It matters to me how you feel and to talk this through and I will revisit this conversation with you when you and I both calm down."

Set limits and boundaries around disrespectful behavior

"It's okay to be angry but it's not okay to call me names. I want to hear how you're feeling. When you call names and scream it makes it difficult to hear what you're saying."

"I won't engage when you're yelling or being disrespectful. It is never productive for either of us. I'm going to take a break and calm down and we can talk later."

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Collaborative Problem Solving

Define the problem.

"You're angry. Swearing isn't okay."

Invite them to share why they're angry if that fits.

"There needs to be a consequence for this behavior."

"We can come up with a consequence together or I can come up with one."

A consequence might be...

I'm noticing that when you're playing video games you're swearing more.

*You need to reset your brain. So for the rest of the day, there will be no video games and you can try again tomorrow."***Empathy**

A Helpful Formula When You Need To Set A Boundary With Your Tween or Teen:

This formula will help you to get very clear about what you are wanting. Even if you don't use this formula exactly it will help you to get clear and you will be less prone to be reactive.

You: I'm noticing _____ (express the problem).

"I'm doing all the dishes."

"You're playing video games 24/7 and not getting out of the house or doing your chores. And I'm sick of yelling."

YOU: Say what you don't want/share feelings.

"I'm feeling resentful and I don't want to feel this way."

"I don't want to be fighting and arguing with you."

YOU: Share what you want.

"I want you to be responsible for your own dishes and contribute to the dishes getting done."

"I would like to come to an agreement with you about a reasonable time to spend on video games."

YOU: Invite them into the conversation.

Listen and negotiate - "When you _____ then you." okay tell me what you think we should do.

Share your thoughts and ask them what they think.

"What can we do to get the dishes done so I am less resentful?"

Listen. Hear what they have to say.

Talk about what you can do to come to an agreement.

Decide agreed-upon consequences. (we will talk about this)

Revisit how it's working after a week.

Allow them to have their feelings(Expect some push back - this may be the hardest part).

8 WAYS TO BUILD CONNECTION WITH YOUR TWEEN OR TEEN

Every good conversation starts with good listening. Next time your teen wants to talk to you, seize the opportunity with these listening skills!

Here are 8 ways to listen to increase the likelihood that your teen wants to talk to you.

1. **Be present in the moment**
 - Offer support through your presence.
 - Stop what you are doing.

- Listen intently.
 - Maintain eye contact.
 - Avoid distractions, especially from your phone, TV, or computer.
2. **Monitor your emotions**
 - Notice how you are feeling (angry, scared, sad, tender, happy...).
 - Set your own emotions aside.
 - Stay calm.
 - Breathe.
 - If heated, take a break. Let them know you will return to the conversation when you calm down.
 3. **Listen with non-verbal behavior**
 - Give affirmative head nods.
 - Lean in.
 - Listen patiently and with interest.
 - Be careful of facial expressions that could shut them down.
 4. **Reflective listen**
 - Watch their facial expressions. Does it match what they are saying?
 - Reflect back their feelings – “I hear you’re angry”. “You seem sad.”
 - Repeat their words as closely as you can.
 - Clarify if you are not sure you understood what they said.
 - Don’t put words in their mouth.
 - KISS: Keep it short and simple.
 - “Hmmm. I hear that you are upset that you got in an argument with...”
 - “You are not sure you want to be friends with them. You are not sure what to do.”
 - “If I understand correctly, you think, that...”
 5. **Use empathy and validate their emotions**
 - Convey that you care.
 - Affirm that you hear them and understand.
 - Set your opinions and feelings aside.
 - Accept their feelings.
 - Don’t view their feelings as right or wrong.
 - Show acceptance.
 - Don’t judge.
 - Don’t tell them to be grateful or use phrases such as, “at least.”
 6. **Listen with respect**

- *Validate they are important to you.*
 - *Convey that what they have to say matters.*
 - *Affirm that they have value.*
 - *Accept what they are saying.*
 - *Hold them in positive regard.*
 - *Trust they can figure out solutions to their problems.*
 - *Encourage them.*
 - *Don't put them down or use sarcasm.*
7. **Ask open-ended questions**
- *What happened after that?*
 - *Who was there?*
 - *What did you do?*
 - *How did that work?*
8. **Don't offer unsolicited advice**
- *Surrender your agenda.*
 - *Don't act like you have the right answer.*
 - *Avoid interrupting.*
 - *Don't act like a know it all.*
 - *Don't assume you understand what they are talking about.*