

Communication with Kids

We're expert communicators.
We can't NOT communicate

Parenting Pyramid. Basis of understanding, leading, disciplining, respecting, nurturing, supporting, teaching, protecting, providing for kids.

We can use communication to build our Parenting Pyramid
and use the Parenting Pyramid to build communication

(See details of the Parenting Pyramid on last page)

- Foundation is love. Must be both affection and devotion. Affectionate nurturing and showing up
- Empathy. Seeing from my child's point of view. Making sense of their world
- Leadership. I'm bigger and stronger than you. I will protect you. Inspiration
- Provision
- Response
- Thriving

We need communication to fuel success on the PP

But communication is surprisingly hard.

We are wonderful and complex
Communication machines, But we are still super imperfect communication machines

And with small children,
we are really prone to experience communication pitfalls, even though we've been conversing with them their whole lives. Conversational duet
Communication with kids is hard for a couple reasons:

1) because a whole lot of what we say doesn't make any sense to them at all. It's all new and it makes no sense, and they just go along with it anyway!

2) is especially hard for your generation. Get off your phone.

Want to communicate better with your kids? Get off your phone
Multitasking and good communication are incompatible,

If you want healthy communication, you have to show up and be present

And we can't if phones are present.

I get it. I have a phone.

But I know I'm not paying attn to my kids when it's in my hand.

We think we *do* pay attention.

And we've convinced ourselves we NEED to have it near

#1: get off the phone

1st step: Communicate love.

Show up. Devotion.

Put your hands on your kids and communicate love and nurturance. Say the words and not just when it's ritualized (bedtime or goodbye).

Communicate empathy and leadership.

Communicate it's safe to talk to me. Communicate trust.

Communicate Integrity:

Words and actions must match up

We say you can come to me for anything then...

We say, "tell me how you feel and I'll tell you why you shouldn't feel that way"

Not "Do what you want but don't come back to me when..."

I'm here and I'm open and you can talk to me.
Affection and devotion.

How do we do that?

By paying attn to *little things that tell our kids who we are.*

Kids see right through us.

Tip #1 ...Kids are like paparazzi.

It's who you are and what you do more than what you say

Doesn't have to be perfect and it won't be perfect.
Kids see right through us but they see the good as well as the not so good.

They see if you are showing up and trying. They see if you mean well by them. And little things make a big difference.

What is the tone in my home?

TIP #2: ask: What's the tone in my home?

Does it sound like I'm inviting a conversation? too stressed or tired or annoyed to have a conversation? Am I making some room to encourage a quiet question?

What ideas do I want to give them about what will happen if they ask a tough question or raise a tough topic? If I don't listen and respond thoughtfully when the stakes are low, what gives them the idea I can do it when the stakes are high? *Create trust that you can be talked to*

Take Conversational turns. Conversational duet.

Commit to get a little bit better at duet, not just distracted "uh huh".
What are we communicating about communication?

Want it to be Give and take.

Showing up. Being affectionate, empathic. Paying attention to the tone in our home and

then *listen*.

TIP # 3: Listen. Seek to understand before you seek to be understood. If we don't spend more energy listening than talking, we are probably answering the wrong question or solving the wrong problem.

Not so much "what should I say?" but "what is he asking?" [Also, get off your phone. :)]

- Listen to their point.
- Ask for clarification..
- "tell me more about that."
- "What's behind your question?"
- Restate their question.
- Use your superior verbal skills to make their point. "Oh, I see. You're wondering..."
- Slow down the conversation.
- Say, "let me think about that a minute"

- Use the **magic words**: Words like,
Help me see what you mean.
Say it again.
Does that make sense?
Do you have a different idea?
Is that what you meant?
I can see why
What do you think would work?
I see now. I didn't see it that way before

- Slowing down also helps us consider in a more self-aware way *what* we're communicating mindlessly.
- Santa, "you're ok" "bye bye"

Listen.

Be curious. Show Interest. Sincere questions. Must be genuine. Be sincerely interested in their point of view. If you don't listen now, they won't talk to you later. Value listening,

I didn't see it that way before

This is Empathy. I see what you mean. Must be genuine.
(TIP #4) Empathy bonds you, deescalates, and soothes

Sex:

You're probably saying too much.

If you slow down and actually listen to what they're asking and answer that, probably pretty simple.

This is true in general. We usually over-explain, over tell, overshare.

PITFALL #1: We usually use 500 words when 5 will do

But especially about sex.

Not so important to say "penis and vagina", its important to listen to the question because they are usually not asking about that.

"Special touching just for grown-ups"

Is it for teenagers? "Teenagers can have sex but it's a bad idea. You have to be all grown up in your body, your heart, your thoughts and feelings and mind and spirit to have sex. Teenagers are all grown up in their bodies, but they are not grown up in their hearts, their thoughts, feelings...

Why isn't it for children? Because it would be yucky for children. It would scare them and confuse them. It is very nice for adults. Adults like it a lot but children would not like it because their bodies and minds and feelings are not grown up yet."

How does the baby get inside the mom's tummy? "From sex"

How does the baby get made? "2 seeds—one from the mom and one from the dad and that starts the baby. Then it grows in the mom's tummy."

How does it get out?
Now maybe vagina.

By the way, the vagina is an internal organ. The correct word is vulva for what you usually mean.

We are communicating that we're open.
(trust) and we're listening to what they're asking (empathy) and we can handle the questions—we are bigger and stronger and able to manage ourselves (leadership)

Can't wait to talk until they're 17.
Teach them:

- desires are normal—their bodies are normal.

You must acknowledge pleasure and not only talk about plumbing, or when they discover pleasure, they think, "Of course they don't want me to have sex. They don't know about THIS!!"

Desire is normal
"I'm not like that."
Everyone is like that.
If you have a functional endocrine system, you are like that.

Snowball downhill
Hormones, brain chemicals, physical body, sex is powerful
Pleasure, not just plumbing

Wars have begun, fortunes have been lost, life has been created, love has been forged all because of sexual desire. It is one of the most powerful forces on earth.

Might be awkward, but oh, well. Communicate I get it, I know about pleasure, I can be talked to, sex is normal. This is leadership.

I can be comfortable with this topic. Even if I'm not, I will rise to this occasion--I will talk to you about this.

And we are never duplicitous.
We never pretend we don't know what they are asking.

Not what is sex? “Um, Boy or girl”. No because now you have communicated I can’t be talked to about this.

Porn

From the 1st day they have a phone—everything is open to supervision. “We can see”

Danger:

Predators. “Good thing we know about safety.” “Good thing you have adults watching you.” You set the tone here.

Violence at school. “Good thing our school has ways to be safe.”

“You don’t have to worry until I’m worried. I’ll worry twice so you don’t have to worry at all.”

“If we’re not in the basement, there is nothing to worry about, because I’ll make sure we go there before we even need to go.”

With a super anxious child,

“I’ll let you know as soon as your worrying needs to start.”

Violence and Pain in the World:

Write a letter

What can WE do?

Parent’s safety:

That’s not going to happen. Is that honest? Yes. Honest enough.

High probability vs low probability

Family stressors:

The rule is we don’t put our burdens on our children’s shoulders.

Honesty is overrated. Never dishonest, but only information that increases security.

Divorce:

Don't say we don't love each other anymore or "this is your father's divorce"
Or "Daddy kissed other girls"

Are you and Daddy going to get divorced? "No. We made a special promise. We made a promise inside of a prayer" and "We work our problems out."
Commitment means it's not ok with me if my partner is not ok. I care about how it feels to be my spouse. Demonstrate that.

Death:

Honest but the best version possible. Grandpa is strong and the doctors are going to help him best they can.

Children will ignore and revisit. Distance and come back. Seem like nothing is wrong. Normal and healthy. Not a bad sign. Not "they need to talk about it and get it out!"

Be open to receiving their thoughts and feelings, not demanding them.

Money:

Stop defending yourself.

Stop over-explaining yourself and saying "we can't afford it"

Pitfall #2: stop pleading your case with them in general

Ok to talk about savings or financial priorities or the need to be responsible, but you don't need to DEFEND

SOCIAL

When your child is hurt by a friend.

Empathy, empathy, empathy

What can parents do to help kids with this?

#1 Check your attitudes about "popularity."

OK to be concerned about your kid being likable? Yes. "Popular?" No.

#2 Understand that kids want to conform, be popular, be cool. Empathize with this.

- Everyone wants to fit in.
- Empathize with that desire, but help kids defocus on that elusive "coolness" of popularity because it is a losing battle.

- Excessive focus on popularity decreases self-esteem.
- Help her remember that everyone is popular in her own social group.

If kid is likable, cooperative, confident, but not “popular?”
Great! That’s the overwhelming majority of successful kids!

If your child has a problem with a friend, MORE EMPATHY, LESS ADVISING! Ask a question.

Not a rush to solve it for them. Not “what did you do?” Or call the other mom.

PF #3: Don’t solve; empathize.

Model/set the tone for openness and self-awareness.

Their social world is getting more complex—social media, etc.

1st, Everybody get off the phone.

2nd listen

CHOICES

In middle school and high school, they will begin to live in a teenage culture in which drinking, drugs, and sex are normal.

So how do we communicate about that? We start now!

The message has to be, “I will protect you. Watch me.”

Guardrails.

We need to be consistent in that message.

Can’t say one thing and do another. “I’ll keep you safe, but not if it’s too hard” (helmet, drinking)

Did you drink? “What’s behind your question?” If they know you did. “I guess my mother should have been watching me better. Lucky for you, yours is.”

We want to be sure that by the time we get to adolescence you have well-established systems for open, transparent communication. That makes room for us to say, “Desire is normal. Sex is powerful”

Conclusion:

Start by putting your hand on your child lovingly.

You've communicated nurturing, affection. (LOVE)

Look at them, ask a question, and listen (and put your phone down).

You've communicated devotion—showing up.

Use your superior verbal skills to make their point.

"I get how this feels for you" (EMPATHY)

"I'm bigger and stronger, you can talk to me" (LEADERSHIP)

Show them that you are comfortable being bigger and stronger on a tough topic.

Show that that you can take care of them if they are scared.

Show them that you are ok.

It's Ok for you to be sad or scared, but I'm still bigger. You are safe with me. ("I'm very sad right now, but I won't always be sad.")

Show that you are thoughtful. Go back to the topic. "I thought more about that and... " Can always go back.

I'll help you get what you need to solve or understand this better. (PROVISION)

Provide information. Resources. Ideas. "Let's ask." "Let me think." "We should look that up." Go back to the topic. Show that you are the thoughtful leader on this.

Then (RESPOND)

Buffer, reassure, limit,

I know when you've had enough information and need rescuing, easing up, or more explaining.

Then we have (THRIVING)--a thriving child who feels safe, understood and welcomed to be curious.

We will miscommunicate with our children every day. Inevitable.
But we want to try to communicate: I'm showing up, I'm loving you, and I care how it feels to be you, I'll help you get what you need. I'll be paying attention.

Now we're thriving.

The Parenting Pyramid



LOVE
Devotion
Affection
Attachment

Nurturance
Security
Grace
Warmth
Goodwill
Kindness

EMPATHIZE

Attunement
Getting it
Perceptiveness
Accurate assessment of... motives, feelings, needs, abilities
Insight
Other-awareness
Sensitivity
Understanding
Compassion

LEAD

Teaching
Protection
Holding self to a higher standard
Being in charge
Inspire admiration

Structure
Self-awareness
Responsibility
Modeling
Fairness

PROVIDE

What they need to succeed (food, sleep, exercise, medicine)

Opportunities
Social teaching
Education
Extra-curricular
Travel
Luxuries
Treats
Fun

RESPOND

Approve
Facilitate
Advise
Supervise

Solve
Prevent
Correct
Revise
Reinforce
Intervene
Rescue
Reward
Punish

THRIVE
Joy
Peace
Flourish
Confidence
Healthy relationships
Success
Closeness
Fulfillment
Meaning
Blooming
Love
Attachment
Attunement