



Practical Parenting

THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

101

KEY POINTS

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Show host Dick Van Patten provides the theme for this program by stating that the single most important skill needed by a parent or caregiver is expertise in the “art of communication.”

Several examples of how to insure that communication within the family is generally positive and interactive are presented, and characteristics of good communication are discussed, along with ways to practice and develop the skills that insure effective dialogue between caregivers and youngsters.

MAJOR MESSAGE

Each parent or caregiver who deals with children needs to make sure that communication between themselves and each child in their care is usually **positive** and **supportive**. When this occurs, it helps children think of themselves as worthwhile, thereby encouraging the development of a **positive self-image**.

When a caregiver’s words or tone of voice are critical or demeaning, children tend to hear only the criticism and ignore the caregiver’s intended message. This “closes the door” on effective, interactive discussion.

“Communication” is a two-way street, and both parties should share information! Good communication from a baby’s earliest days tends to build a feeling of trust and a positive desire to learn and develop.

“Communication” is often a problem within any family. A few things that tend to undermine effective ongoing communication include:

- (1) the constant stresses of everyday life;
- (2) fatigue from the hectic pace of life;
- (3) failure to identify problems clearly;
- (4) failure to determine ownership of a problem.



Features of good communication include:

- (1) acknowledging that it is a **two-way process**;
- (2) learning to listen effectively;
- (3) modeling good communication skills;
- (4) building and fostering trust;
- (5) realizing that criticism and sarcasm don’t belong in serious attempts at communication.

Parents who want to improve communication in their household should:

- (1) show love and support for respondents;
- (2) listen attentively and encourage this in others;
- (3) don’t over-react or respond too quickly to what’s being said;
- (4) repeat key ideas to clarify what you or your child means or understands.



WHILE VIEWING

As you view the program, try to pick out and remember at least one example of “poor communication” as well as the example of a way to improve that particular communication. Be prepared to discuss or reflect on this example! You may wish to jot it down.

REFLECTIONS

After viewing the program, take a few quiet moments to reflect on some of the points you consider to be important for “communication” with children. Consider these questions:

- (1) do you (or someone you’ve observed) tend to use an angry tone when trying to get a child to improve a behavior? If so, how could the communication be altered?
- (2) have you (or someone you’ve observed) used one of the “undesirable” approaches to initiating a discussion with a child, as illustrated in the video? If “yes,” suggest a better way to go about starting the discussion.
- (3) do you believe that mixing criticism with praise is absolutely undesirable? Why, or why not?

