

## Communication: Do You Hear Me? Keeping the Lines of Communication Open

From birth, communication is a major part of your life. Communication is the primary means of connecting with other human beings. Communication allows you to share who you are, relay important messages and bond with others around you.

Knowing that communication is an important aspect of an individual's life is important, but what does it exactly involve?

- **Keeping the “doors” open:** discussing sensitive issues can be a hard thing for adults and children. By keeping the door open you are talking to children about the difficult issues.
  - ✓ “What do you think?”
  - ✓ “This is why I feel this way...”
  - ✓ “I don’t know, I’ll find out.”
- **Active listening:** expresses interest and care for the other person you’re communicating with. Active listening means the listener is not changing or adding to the meaning of the message.
  - ✓ Incorporate paraphrase (but don’t change the meaning).
  - ✓ Focus on the content.
  - ✓ Don’t challenge the speaker’s message.
- **Clarity:** communication can be difficult when the message is lost. Keeping your communication clear and concise helps move it forward.
  - ✓ Ask questions if you don’t understand or are confused.
  - ✓ Ask the other person to relay back your message.
- **Body language:** watching how people angle their bodies, cross their arms or even roll their eyes has a large impact on how effective your communication is.
  - ✓ What are you doing with your body?
  - ✓ How is your facial expression arranged?
  - ✓ What message is the combination sending?
- **Words to avoid:** communication is not only how you deliver the message, but how it is received by the other party. By avoiding certain words the message may be more effective.
  - ✓ “But”
  - ✓ “Have to”
  - ✓ “Always” or “never”

Communication not only involves what you hear but how you present your body language, and how well you listen to other others. If you feel that you would like to learn more about communication with parents, children or co-workers contact a counselor at T.E.A.M.

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700 Transfer Road St. Paul, MN 55114 p 651-642-0182 f 651-642-1809 Toll Free 1-800-634-7710

Web Site: [www.team-mn.com](http://www.team-mn.com)