

5/13/20

Promoting Good Communication Skills

Peggy Pisano

Effective communication allows for the exchange of thoughts/feelings and ideas. Not only does the communicator have to give the message, but also the receiver has to understand the message for communication to occur.

People tend to take communication for granted; they think communicating is easy. This is really far from the truth. Good communication is a very complex system, comprised of expressive communication and receptive communication.

Expressive communications are those things we say.

Receptive communications are those things that we receive from the messenger.

People are generally hard wired to connect with others; communication is a way of reaching that divide.

Good communication can result in improved interactions with others, improved test scores and improved social/life situations. Conversely, breakdowns in communication can lead to a wide range of difficulties such as social problems, hurt feelings, trouble in relationships, frustration and anger.

Communication (although not always verbal) occurs at a very young age. Toddlers who may not be able to communicate their needs might cry or tantrum in an effort to gain something that they need or want. Later in life, teens might storm out or shut down when frustrated by communication with parents/guardians.

We may also see varied idiosyncratic communication forms from individuals with serve disabilities who may not be able to use language to communicate. These communication styles might be body movements, gestures, pointing, vocalizations and at times acting out behaviors. With these children it is important for parents or caregivers to study these communications styles to assess the needs of the individual. Therefore communication is not always verbal.

Good communication is a habit that should be taught and fostered early in a child's life.

Strategies for good communication:

1. Make sure you have the person's attention, maintain eye contact.
2. Be a role model, model good communication skills children are likely to do what they see.
3. Demonstrate active listening by leaning in towards the speaker (body language is important)
4. Try to send a clear message that is congruent verbally and non-verbally, make sure the tone agrees with the message.
5. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Being consistent about the message, this is especially important with children.
6. Ask for feedback from the receiver, did the person understand the message.
7. Indicate you are paying attention by nodding, smiling etc.
8. Wait for the person to complete their thought without interrupting. Teach your child when to interject into the conversation. Teach your child to use volume control (ex. Use your inside voice).
9. Ask clarifying questions.
10. As the receiver, paraphrase what you heard from the speaker.
11. For children try not to use too many idioms young children and children with disabilities may not understand their meanings.
12. Pause, wait before engaging in a response.

Games that can Teach Foundational Skills:

1. Guess the object- have the child feel an object and try to describe to others what it feels like, have others guess what the object is.
2. Play show and tell, have the child describe to someone something that they like or know well.
3. Picture telling-give the child a picture and have them make up a story about the picture.
4. Have children work on a project with siblings or family members that might require conversation and collaboration.
5. Play telephone- encourage active listening to the message.

