

# Survival Strategies: How to Improve Family Functioning



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# Family Communication



- **Communication**
  - Refers to the way verbal and non-verbal information is exchanged
  - Attentiveness to what others are thinking and feeling

# Four Styles of Communication



Example:

Father is disappointed about his son failing to complete his chore.

- **Clear and Direct Communication**
  - “Son, I’m disappointed that you forgot to take out the trash today without my having to remind you.”
- **Clear and Indirect Communication**
  - “It’s disappointing when people forget to complete their chores.”
- **Masked and Direct Communication**
  - “Son, people just don’t work as hard as they used to.”
- **Masked and Indirect Communication**
  - “The youth of today are very lazy.”

# Keys to Build Effective Family Communication



- **Communicate frequently...**
  - Talk in the car
  - Turn the electronic devices off (this includes parents, too 😊)
  - Eat dinner together
  - Schedule informal or formal family meetings
  - Talk to your children at bedtime

# Keys to Build Effective Family Communication



- **Communicate Clearly and Directly...**
  - Get the person's attention before speaking
  - Make requests simple (short, clear, direct)
  - Talk **with** *not* at children...

# Keys to Build Effective Family Communication



- **Be an Active Listener...**
  - Listen to what others are saying
  - Try your best to understand the point of view of the other person
  - Pay attention to their verbal and non-verbal messages
  - Respond by nodding your head and saying “I understand”
  - Ask for clarification if needed...
    - ✦ “Help me understand?”
    - ✦ “What did you mean when you said...?”
    - ✦ “Did I understand you correctly?”

# Keys to Build Effective Family Communication



- **Think about the Person With Whom You Are Communicating...**
  - Not all family members communicate in the same manner or at the same level (especially young children)
  - Listen carefully to what your child is saying without making assumptions
  - Use age appropriate language

# Keys to Build Effective Family Communication



- **Pay Attention to Non-Verbal Messages...**
  - In addition to the words being said, pay close attention to facial expressions and body language
    - ✦ Posture
    - ✦ Eye contact
    - ✦ Gestures with hands and arms
    - ✦ Speech
    - ✦ Tone of voice



# Keys to Build Effective Family Communication



- **Be Positive...**
  - Give compliments
  - Words of encouragement
  - Smile
  - Hugs
  - High-five, thumbs up
- **Catch someone being kind...and praise!!!**

# Family Time – Home Strategies



- Dinnertime
- Bedtime Routine
- Transitions

# Dinner or Meal Preparation



- **Making Dinner Together**
  - Have your child help prepare dinner once a week
- **Sequencing is used for many skills in life**
  - Ex. Pizza – rolling out the dough, spread the sauce, sprinkle the cheese, bake the pizza, cut and eat it

# Food for Thought: What's for Dinner?



- Encourage your child to look around and make a guess about what is for dinner...
  - What do you see?
  - What do you smell?
  - How is the table set?
    - ✦ Prompt children to ask questions to get clues

# Where did it Come From?



- Ask your child to think about the origin of the food
  - Ex. Farmers planted crops and harvested them
    - ✦ Children can imagine what it might be like to work on a farm or that various ingredients in the salad originated from various places
  - Deeper appreciation for the food
  - Help children realize that food doesn't just magically appear

# Formal Dinners



- Occasionally, have a “formal” dinner with just your family using cloth napkins and formal place settings
  - When you have company or are invited out, your child will be familiar with the concept of “formal” dinner and be better able to handle differences in seating arrangements

# Battle-Free Bedtime



- There's no one-size-fits-all bedtime routine
- Whatever your routine, stick with it

# Unplug and Wind Down



- Long before your kiddos head hits the pillow, your kiddo will need to start the process of winding down (body and brain)
- An hour before bedtime...
  - No caffeine
  - No screens (computer, TV, video game, iPod)



# Set the Mood



- Aim for low lighting and soft sounds
  - If your child needs music to go to sleep, go with music only
- Aim to stay within the *sleep environment*
  - Read books
  - How was your day?
  - Sweet dreams prompts
- Resist his plea to leave the bedroom
  - Give the dog kisses
  - Have a snack and glass of water
  - Go to the bathroom

# Is Your Child Getting Enough Sleep?



<b>AGE</b>	<b>SLEEP REQUIRED (hrs)</b>
Newborns (up to 2 months)	12 – 18 hrs
Infants (2 months – 1 year)	14 – 15 hrs
Toddlers (1 – 3 years)	12 – 15 hrs
Preschoolers (3 – 5 years)	11 – 13 hrs
School age ( 5 – 12 years)	9 – 11 hrs
Teenage (12 – 18 years)	8.5 – 9.5 hrs
Adults	7 – 9 hrs

# Make A Plan



- Exactly what you do before bedtime is a mix of personal preference and practicality
- Ensure the routine is smooth and consistent
- Once you have a plan, write it down and share it with your kids
  - Visuals are often most helpful

# Transitions



- Transition refers to a change...
  - Unknown
  - Unpredictable
  - Stressful
  - Overwhelming
  - Difficult to understand

# Transition Tactics



- Give advance warning
- Develop rituals
- Keep your language simple
- Offer choices
- Avoid making threats

# Sequencing



- **Teach your child that things happen in sequence**
  - “First this, then that...”
- **Provide positive reinforcement or incentives**
  - “First pick up your toys, then we can go for a walk.”
- **Teach transition words**
  - First you roll the ball to me, then I roll it back to you.
  - Now we’re watching Thomas, after we’ll bake cookies.
  - Your brother is first in the bath and then you’re next.
  - You can have a drink after you wash your hands.
  - Let’s line up the toys...Teddy is first, Nemo is next, Spiderman is last.

# Bottom Line



- The more a child can predict and participate in schedules and activities, the less likely challenging behaviors will occur.

# Resources



- [www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)
  - Michelle Garcia Winner's website is filled with resources, articles, explanations and tools for a wide range of social thinking topics and across the lifespan. Westlake Porter Public Library/CFK has many of the books available to borrow.
- **Make Social Learning Stick! How to Guide and Nurture Social Competence Through Everyday Routines and Activities – Elizabeth A. Sautter, MA CCC-SLP**



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# Questions and Answers



- Questions, Answers and Discussion