

Communicating effectively with our children

A four week online course

Week 2

Agenda Week 2

- Review from last week
- Questions and concerns
- Learning to listen, contd.
- Building rapport
 - Setting the environment
 - The art of validation and paraphrasing
- Learning to talk differently
 - General points
 - Junk praise versus effective praise
 - Expressing concerns
 - Keeping the lines of communication open as they grow

Review

- What is communication
- Goals of communication
- Why learn to communicate effectively?
- Results of poor communication
- Recognizing effective communication
- Learning to listen
 - Intent versus impact
 - Filters

Learning the skills

Part 1

Learning to listen



Learning to listen, contd.

- Did you notice yourself listening differently this past week?
- What went well? What did you notice?
- What was the biggest challenge?

Some ways of ineffective listening

- ignoring
- pretend listening
- selective listening (only to what suits us)
- attentive listening (to compare with our experience)



All these kinds of listening are
from our frame of reference
They may have their place, but are
generally not effective in building
communication

Main thing to remember is to suspend your need to answer. To build communication we need to listen to understand the other

Some general points on listening

- Be interested and attentive – model good listening skills
- Only ask questions if you are interested in the answer
- Ask relevant questions to encourage talking– not dead ones
- Listen patiently – people think faster than they speak. Children often take longer than adults to find the right word. Listen as though you have plenty of time.
- Diagnose before you prescribe
- Mirror back or paraphrase what you hear.
- Focus on the Speaker's message. Don't rebut.
- Do not add new information while you are paraphrasing – including body and eye language

Some general points on listening (contd.)

- Keep a 'talk fast' occasionally
- 'Listen' to nonverbal clues
- Remember that listening does not mean agreeing
- Don't advise or evaluate (agree/disagree)
- Don't be tempted to add your own story
- Don't interpret motive or behavior

Learning the skills
Part 2
Setting the environment and
building rapport

Setting the environment for communication

- Meet them on their turf
- Eat together often
- Talk about the highs and the lows
- Be physically and emotionally present
- Share yourself (model communication)
- Side by side versus face to face
- Have a bedtime routine
- No nagging zone (the industrial size zipper)
- Hold the interview!

Practice using the zipper!



Learning the skills
Part 3
Paraphrasing and empathizing

Paraphrasing: a listening skill where you *do* speak but only to help understand your child

Paraphrasing is “restating what the child said in different words in order to demonstrate attention and understanding and to encourage the speaker to continue.”

Guidelines for paraphrasing

- The goal of paraphrasing is to ensure that you have understood what your child is saying
- You DO NOT paraphrase every time your child is talking to you. It is not a natural way of talking
- It is most beneficial to use when the child or you are upset, when you are in disagreement, when the child accuses you of not understanding, and when you are at a loss for words!! (more on this later)

Guidelines for paraphrasing

- Ask the child if you got it right – check the accuracy of your understanding
- Do not restate negative statements that your child may have made about themselves in a way that confirms this perception. If someone says, “I am so stupid,” it is not appropriate to say, “So, you feel stupid.” You may say something like: “It sounds like something happened that is upsetting you.”
- Use paraphrasing sparingly. Your objective is to encourage your child to continue speaking, and constant interruption may be counterproductive. Typically, you will use paraphrasing when the child hesitates or stops speaking.

The need for empathy



Non verbal accompaniments to paraphrasing to build understanding and empathy

- Being focused and not multitasking
- Nodding your head
- Mirroring the speaker's facial expression (e.g., smiling when then speaker smiles, frowning when the speaker frowns)
- Matching tone and energy

Empathy is one step beyond mirroring
and paraphrasing

To display empathy, we need to listen
to the feelings behind the words

Although anyone can paraphrase, you
cannot fake empathy

It comes from a genuine desire to
understand the world view of another

Practice with Empathizing

- "You're feeling sad (or mad or nervous or glad) about . . ."
- "It bothers you that your brother got to go on a class trip and you didn't."
- "I know you're feeling scared about..."
- "You wish Grandpa was here with you, don't you?"
- "You missed the goal, and you're worried you let your team down. Do I have that right?"
- "It feels good when you finally make friends at a new school."
- "The way you hung up the phone makes me think you're upset about something."
- "It's frustrating and sad when you look forward all week to the ball game but then get sick and have to stay home."
- "You're really excited about the class trip to the aquarium."

How not to say it

- "I know how you must feel." (The feeling is not described.)
- "I understand." (Understand what?)
- "I still love you." (But is that your child's concern right now?)
- "You'll be fine." (Reassurance is not empathy.)
- "It's not as big a problem as you're making it." (You're telling your child he is wrong to feel the way he does.)
- "Life does that to you sometimes. The important thing is to think about something positive." (Your intent is to make her feel better, but this is not empathy.)

Clues that you are not being empathic (when you think you are):

- You rush in with answers or solutions.
- You find yourself debating with your child about how she should be feeling.
- You are providing reassurances before you've clearly expressed your understanding of your child's concerns.
- You want to get the conversation over with.
- You are very angry.

What are the barriers to Emphatic Listening?

- Evaluating – agreeing/disagreeing
- Advising
- When I was your age
- Interpreting – comparing with others or explaining another's motives or behavior
- Confusing listening with agreement . . (aka parental anxiety)

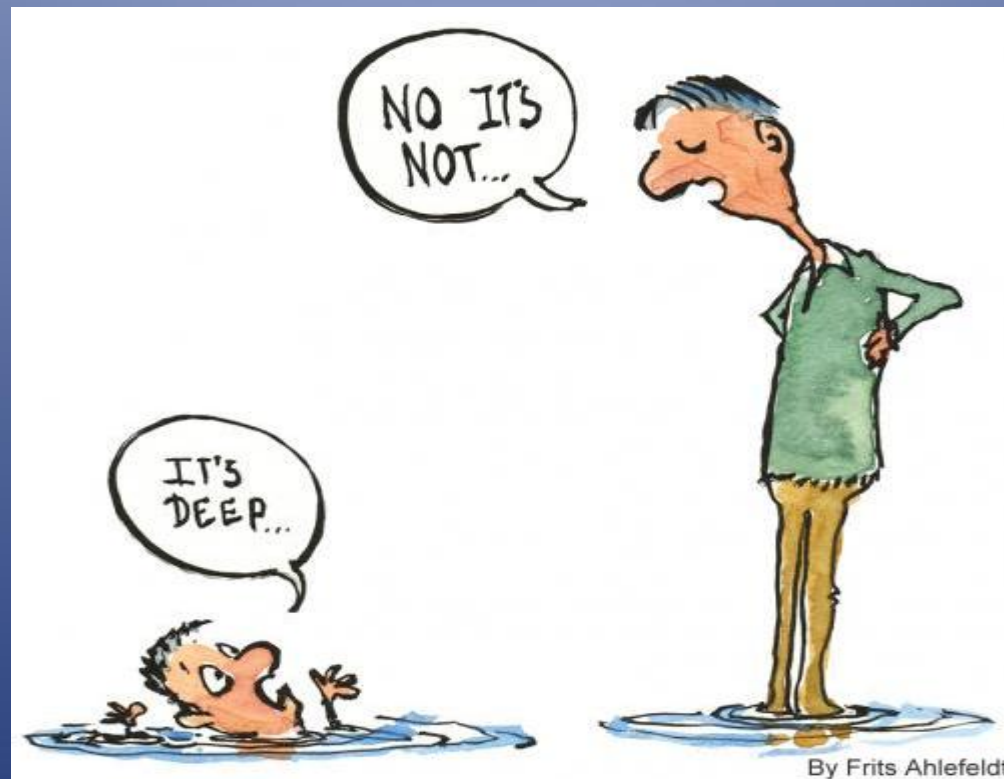
A word on parental anxiety

We really want to see our children happy.

We hurt when they hurt.

Authentic communication requires that we learn to manage our anxiety about their well being and contend ourselves with being witness to, and sharing their experience, even if it is painful

Do you ever find yourself debating with your child about how she should be feeling?



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The best time to use empathy is:

- When your child is emotional and not likely to listen to reason (this is also the hardest time)
- When you're not sure what the real problem is (empathy can draw your child out)
- If your child is sensitive by nature
- If you want your child to understand her emotions

Questions and comments?

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