

Summary: Communication

Why Communication Matters

Good communication is the foundation for a strong parent-teen relationship and sets the tone for addressing challenges at home. While it may feel like a small step, starting with positive, supportive communication can open the door to trust, collaboration, and problem-solving.

This week, we focus on understanding the barriers to communication and how validation can help build connection.

Common Communication Barriers

Both parents and teens face challenges when communicating. Parents may feel frustrated, unheard, or overwhelmed. Teens may feel criticized, misunderstood, or avoid conversations altogether. These barriers often lead to common argument triggers, such as:

- Schoolwork or grades
- Chores
- Screen time
- Speaking disrespectfully
- Disagreeing about friends, hobbies, or clothes

Recognizing these triggers is the first step in improving communication.

The Power of Validation

Validation helps teens feel understood and respected. Even if you don't agree with their perspective, you can show that you acknowledge and accept their emotions. This builds trust and lays the groundwork for problem-solving.

Validation also teaches teens to identify and regulate their emotions—a skill that will benefit them for life.

How to Validate

1. **Tune In:** Pause and observe your teen's facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. Take a deep breath to prevent reacting too quickly.
2. **Guess Their Emotion:** Name what you think they might be feeling. It's okay to get it wrong—they'll correct you!
"You seem frustrated."
"It looks like you feel nervous."

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Summary: Communication

How to Validate, continued

3. Name the Reason: Acknowledge what might be causing the feeling, even if you don't agree with it.

"It makes sense you're upset; that math test was really hard."

"I'd feel overwhelmed too if I had a busy day like yours."

Tips for Supportive Communication

- Pick the right time and avoid distractions.
- Start the conversation on a positive note.
- Reflect back what your teen is saying.
- Avoid lecturing or repeating yourself.
- Set limits calmly when necessary. For example: *"It makes sense you're angry your sister took your shirt, AND swearing isn't allowed in our family."*

Home Practice

This week, find one opportunity each day to validate your teen's emotions. Use this simple template:

"I imagine you are feeling _____. This makes sense to me because _____."

Examples:

"I imagine you're feeling embarrassed about the missing homework. It makes sense to me because I know it's hard to stay on top of everything."

"You seem disappointed that your friends canceled plans. I get it; you were looking forward to seeing them."

Remember, this week is about building understanding, not jumping to problem-solving. Validation helps your teen feel heard and creates a calm space for future conversations.

Let us know how your week goes in the community chat! We'll also check in the next session to hear your "flowers and weeds" related to validation.