



PARENT/CHILD COMMUNICATION

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Benefits of Effective Communication
- Developmental Issues
- Helping Kids Deal With Feelings
- Basic Principles of Effective Parent/Child Communication
- Communicating During Conflict
- Talking with Children About Deployment



BENEFITS OF PARENT/CHILD COMMUNICATION

- Good communication = a good relationship
- A child's self-esteem is increased when they feel heard and understood by their parents
- Effective communication from parents increases a child's compliance with rules



DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 3 – 5 YEAR OLD

Understands more words and ideas than is able to express

- Asks lots of questions – especially “why?”
- Beginning to use language as a tool to get what they want
- Lives in the “here and now” with no concept of time
- Needs lots of repetition



COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR THE 3 – 5 YEAR OLD

CONTINUED

- Establish a connection
- Help them focus
- Use age-appropriate language
- Make an offer they can't refuse



COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR THE 3 – 5 YEAR OLD

CONTINUED

- Use positive language
- Offer choices whenever possible
- Give advance notice
- Use lots of repetition



DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 6-9 YEAR OLD

- Peer group becomes important
- Starts to develop a strong sense of self
- Begins to evaluate themselves in relation to others
- Sensitive to criticism
- Becoming able to disguise their feelings



DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 6-9 YEAR OLD

CONTINUED

- Concrete thinking
- Needs lots of structure
- Chronic worrier – needs lots of reassurance
- Better concept of time



DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 10-12 YEAR OLD

- Entering puberty – beginning to have mood swings
- Attempting to separate from parents and become more independent
- Thinking is black and white
- Peer group is extremely important



DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 10-12 YEAR OLD

CONTINUED

- Rebels verbally rather than with temper tantrums
- Concrete thinking
- Wants to “fit in” with peers
- Very sensitive to criticism
- Able to hide their feelings



DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 13 – 18 YEAR OLD

- Developing abstract thinking
- May be thinking philosophically and questioning parent's values
- Wants independence
- Values privacy



DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 13 – 18 YEAR OLD

CONTINUED

- Has mood swings
- Expresses anger verbally
- Highly sensitive to criticism
- Impulsive behaviors
- Talks less to parents and more to peers



COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS

- Make eye contact and give your full attention
- Validate their feelings and concerns
- Provide lots of reassurance for older children – they are worriers
- Ask for their ideas and input
- Avoid being judgmental



COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS

CONTINUED

- Be open to learning something new from them
- Establish a regular time to talk
- Don't talk down to them – show respect for their
- Opinions
- Use written communication
- **LISTEN** more often than you talk



KIDS & THEIR FEELINGS

- Feelings affect how we communicate
- Kids can't always recognize and name their feelings (even older ones)
- If kids can identify and name their own feelings, they can recognize feelings in others



HELPING KIDS DEAL WITH FEELINGS

- Be accepting of your child's feelings
- Help them learn to recognize their feelings
- Help them name their feelings
- Help them learn to express feelings in appropriate ways



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PARENT/CHILD COMMUNICATION

- Give your child your undivided attention
- Paraphrase what you heard them say
- Keep it brief – decreases likelihood of child becoming “parent deaf”
- Make and maintain eye contact
- Address your child directly by using their name, Eric, will you please...”



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PARENT/CHILD COMMUNICATION

CONTINUED

- Don't interrupt – let your child tell their story
- Use “I” statements – Instead of “You’d better do this.” Say “I want you to do this.”
- Ask open ended questions – Instead of “Did you have a good day at school? Try “What was the most fun thing you did at school today?”



TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING DURING CONFLICT

- Calm your child down – nothing sinks in when a child is having an emotional melt down
- The louder your child yells, the softer you should respond.
- Don't ask questions when a negative answer is not an option.



TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING DURING CONFLICT

- Do not make threats or use degrading language
- If a matter is really closed to discussion, say no. I'm not changing my mind about this.”
- Be consistent
- Use “When you...I feel...because...” statements



TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DEPLOYMENT

- Children need advance notice if possible
- If possible, both parents should talk to the child together.
- Use age appropriate language
- Be honest
- Use visuals when possible.



TALKING ABOUT DEPLOYMENT

- Anticipate your child's questions
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings
- Listen without being judgmental
- Let them know they are not to blame
- Help them recognize the importance of your job



TALKING ABOUT DEPLOYMENT

- Let them know you love them no matter what
- Talk with them about how you will communicate while you're away – email, letters, tapes, vidoes
- Praise them often
- Remember – younger children will need lots of repetition.



SUMMARY

- Effective communication with children increases their self esteem and compliance with rules
- Using non-judgmental language and really listening to your child helps build trust and self-esteem
- When talking about deployment, anticipate your child's questions and encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- Seek help if communication methods aren't working.





QUESTIONS?

RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.Tricare.mil
- Behavioral Health Services



REFERENCES

- Family Readiness, Family Readiness Program, Robins AFB Georgia
- www.defenselink.mil
- Predeployment Ongoing Readiness, Operation R.E.A.D.Y.
- www.militarychild.org
- www.wholefamily.com
- www.familyeducation.com
- www.parenting-ed.org
- www.askdrear.com





THANK YOU

