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 increase a child’s compliance with rules
DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF THE 3 – 5 YEAR OLD

Understands more words and ideas they are 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

• 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
• 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
• 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
• 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
• 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…”
• 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 positive 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
• 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
• Let them know you love them no matter what
• Talk with them about how you will communicate while you’re away – email, letters, tapes, videos
• Praise them often
• Remember – younger children will need lots of repetition.
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](http://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.askdrears.com
THANK YOU