

Empathetic Parent and Child Communication

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It is exciting to be partnered with my blog sisters, and to have the opportunity to reach out to you through this, our second blog. I am the mother of five wonderful adult children, plus a cherished niece, who

joined our household when she was in high school. I am also proud to be the grandmother of three fascinating grandchildren, a twelve year old granddaughter, nine year old twins (a boy and a girl), plus a beautiful six year old grandnephew. I have the great fortune to be able to spend time with my four young ones on a regular basis. At this time in my life, I have a unique opportunity to watch my grandchildren grow and develop. I see the affect my parenting has had on the kinds of parents my children have become. I also as see how well their parenting has affected their young ones. In my work, I tell parents that they are the first and most important teachers of their children. This truth is confirmed for me as I watch my family evolve.

A key ingredient to a gratifying relationship with our

children is effective communication. As families, we communicate for many reasons. We communicate when we play and enjoy each other's company. We converse about experiences, beliefs and opinions we hold. We discuss decisions we have to make or problems we need to solve. Sometimes as parents we provide discipline. We communicate in different ways. A look or a nod may be all our children need in order to know that we are tuned in to what they are doing. Whether it is a nod of approval for a great accomplishment or a look of disapproval for a poor behavior choice, being there and paying attention communicates love and caring to our children. Effective communication starts with being attentive and ready to listen to what our children have to say, no matter the age or stage of development.

Listening is the most important part of communicating because through listening, we learn what our children need and how best to respond. When we listen, sometimes it's necessary to repeat what our children are saying or to rephrase what we're hearing to make sure we're getting the story straight. We listen for how they are feeling so that we can put ourselves in their shoes and better understand what they need from us. When our children tell us things that disappoint us or require that we discipline them, we can still be empathetic and understand their thinking. If we are empathetic, our communication will flow from our love for our children, even when we are providing discipline. As we continue to communicate over time, we will be more skilled at choosing the right words, the most effective tone of voice, and body language so that our messages will be clearly understood.

Whether the purpose of our communication is casual or serious, if we establish an attitude of mutual respect in our communication, many conflicts will be averted. Communicating with mutual respect can allow us to express opinions, even ones where there is disagreement, without having to revert to arguments or fighting. We or our children may not always be happy at the end of some conversations, but we will have a better chance of coming to agreement and finding solutions to problems with a respectful approach.

I have learned that as I have become a better listener, my responses have been more welcomed by my family members, even when the message has not been a positive one. Of course, I'm not perfect and when I slip into my old habits of reacting before listening or raising my voice, I see the difference in the reactions I receive from my family. Effective communication deepens our relationships with our loved ones. Those are the bonds that last over time.

With love and affection,

Rosemarie

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