

COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITH TEENS

by Linda King

"The tragic outstanding difficulty between teens and adults is poor communication. These doors can be kept open during adolescence if a sympathetic relationship has been established while the child is young. Much of this depends upon our ability to respect the child, even when we disagree with him."

Rudolf Dreikurs, Children: the Challenge

Listening Responsively

How to:

Be silent--listen through an entire explanation

Use words which convey acceptance of the individual and respect for his/her thoughts.

Create a warm atmosphere for talk. Choose a good time.

Relax--respond to the child/teen as an intimate friend.

Try to identify the **FEELING** behind the words. Talk about feelings and emotions.

Influence--show a range of possibilities, and other points of view.

Make as many positive comments as possible.

Be satisfied with increased understanding and awareness.

It takes practice to identify and respond to feelings. We must converse with our children on a regular basis.

Our children cannot be open with us if we impress them with how wrong they are.

How not to:

Formulate your response while the other person is talking (i.e., not truly listening.)

Use time worn parental phrases of reply (You ought to... You'll feel differently tomorrow. With your potential... When I was your age...)

Insist on a talk when the time is inappropriate either for you or the child/teen.

Display tension or hostility in facial or body expression.

Assume you know how the child feels because you had similar experiences as a child.

Manipulate--try to get the child to follow/accept your line of thought.

Criticize.

Insist on seeking an immediate solution.