

Communication/Problem-Solving Steps

Here is a summary of our communication and problem-solving steps:

1) Define the problem

- a. **Describe the problem that is concerning you.** Stick to the facts without adding judgement or blame.
- b. **Express how the situation makes you feel.** Stick to your feelings and emotions (happy, sad, angry, worried). Doing this helps to communicate your feelings without assigning blame. Keep it focused on what you want done, versus what you do not want.
- c. **Start positive and show appreciation for past efforts.** This helps others see that you acknowledge their effort towards solving this problem. Keep your language positive, and be genuine.
- d. **Take responsibility for contributing to the problem behavior.** This acknowledges that any problem behavior exists in a system, and it is not only the fault of the person who caused it.

2) Generate solutions

- a. **Propose a solution and invite other suggestions.** Propose a solution that is fair and reasonable. Make sure that it has specific actions that are under the person's control. Avoid suggesting solutions out of frustration that are punishing to the other.
- b. **Weigh the pros and cons of the proposed solutions.** Make sure to listen to each other. Be flexible and open to considering the other ideas. Use "I statements" when expressing concerns about proposed solutions. Stick to the facts and avoid blaming.

3) Make a plan

- a. **Choose a solution that is the best fit for everybody.** Choose the solution that seems to have the most advantages and least disadvantages. Make sure that it has specific actions that are under the person's control. Avoid choosing solutions out of frustration that are punishing to the other.
- b. **Set a time to review, revise, and reward success.** Communication and problem solving is an ongoing process. Most solutions need to be reviewed and revised. Set a time to review progress and consider next steps. This is a good time to make it clear how successful problem solving benefits everyone.

Communication/Problem Solving Worksheet

Let's talk about communication in your family. Kids, what do you feel are causes for communication breaking down at home?

Causes of Communication Breakdown

<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't feel like my opinions matter.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents (or others) don't wait for me to finish.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents (or others) only focus on what they think I did wrong.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents (or others) don't recognize my efforts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents (or others) think they are always right.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents (or others) get emotional, and that makes me emotional.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not being spoken to like an adult.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____

Here is a worksheet to use this plan to solve a problem. For each step fill in how you would talk about a problem. You can make-up an example just to practice, or you can plan out how you want to talk about a real problem later, or kids and parents can use these steps to go through a real disagreement right now together.

Write a statement describing the facts you are concerned about:

I am concerned about _____

Write a statement showing how you feel:

I feel _____

Write a statement proposing a solution:

I suggest _____

What ideas do you have? (Answer) _____

Write a statement proposing a solution:

- I think this solution might work because _____ but I am concerned it won't work because _____. What are your thoughts?"

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Write a plan:

Let's first try _____

Write a plan to review, revise, and reward:

If it works we can consider _____