

Effective Parent's Toolkit

Course Name:

Verbal and Non-Verbal Communications

Core Material – Reading (Verbal and Non-verbal Communications)



OK, so if you feel you have created a safe place and are consistently applying rules, boundaries and structures, what is the message you are actually sending? What you say, the tone, and your look or stance can be at odds with what you are trying to convey.

Perception is Reality. What that means is that if you say one thing, yet your tone, your body language and your actions express something else, your words will be lost, or at the very least misread. Take the simple word “no.” if you simply state the word “no” in a low, calm voice, the importance is lessened and it is merely a point of disagreement, or statement of fact. If the same word is said, in the same low calm voice, but, elongated, “noooooooo” there is a bit more attitude behind it. If you raise the volume and add wide opened eyes, the meaning is almost one of fear or panic. What if you keep the wide open eyes and whisper the word? Now you are indicating a more surprised or shocked response. It is the same word, but using our face, our tone and even our body, we can convey a completely different message. If you are not aware of the message you are sending, you will not understand the reaction you receive. Be purposeful with our words, tone and body gestures. If you say something and your child reads it differently, than you expect, ask why they took it that way. They may say, “because you’re mad” or “because you are yelling” or even “you are being sarcastic.” Was that your intended message? You can be as empathetic as you can, but if your message is sarcastic, then you are defeating your purpose.

Make sure your facial expressions and your actions are not saying something you do not intend to say. Eye-rolling, frowning, and smirking will all express disbelief, sarcasm, and insincerity. Your body language can also say something other than what you intend. If your child is telling something important, and you are continuing to do something else, like doing the dishes, reading the newspaper, working on your laptop, watching television, that indicates that you are

not paying full attention to what they are saying and that you do not place value in what they are saying. If you need to finish what you are doing before you can pay 100% attention to them, interrupt them, tell them you need to finish what you are doing so you can be fully present and really hear what they are telling you, and that you will be ready in XX minutes. Keep in mind that this issue may be time sensitive, and that they may lose the interest in telling you if you wait too long, or if you put them off in order to watch a TV program.

If you expect your child to talk to you, and for you to build a trusting relationship with your child, you must eliminate abusive language from your vocabulary. Judgmental words like Stupid, Idiot, Lazy, Crazy, Foolish, Dumb, Ignorant, brainless, etc., as well as any off color or profane words are NEVER acceptable when speaking with your kids. Have you ever met the children of parents who say "my kids are just lazy," or "my son is a loser," or "my daughter will be pregnant before she graduates..."? They probably are right, but more likely because that is what those children's parents expect. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "If you look for the bad in people expecting to find it, you surely will." There is an entire Effective Parenting Tool called "Point out the Good" that focuses on what we create, and how it develops our children's self image.



Summary and Review Questions

What is the benefit to the parent in Creating a Safe Space?

What is the benefit to the Child in Creating a Safe Space?

What is never allowed in the safe space?

How can you establish a safe space to talk to your child?

Action Steps – Putting it All into Action
