

FAMILY COMMUNICATION SKILLS

From Skills Training for Children with Behavior Disorders: A Parent and Therapist Guidebook by Michael Bloomquist, 1996, The Guilford Press.

DON'Ts

- Long lectures or sermons
- Blaming, i.e. "You need to stop ____" or "It's your fault," etc.
- Vague statements, i.e. "Shape up" or "Knock it off" or "I don't like that"
- Asking negative questions, i.e. "Why do you always do that?" or "How many times must I tell you?"
- Poor listening, with looking away, silent treatment, crossing arms and so forth
- Interrupting others
- Not checking to see if you fully understand others
- Put downs, i.e. "You're worthless," "I'm sick of you," or threats and so forth
- Yelling or screaming or ranting
- Sarcasm
- Going from topic to topic
- Bringing up old issues or past behavior
- Not matching verbal and non-verbal communications, i.e. saying "I love you" while pounding a fist angrily on the table
- Keeping feelings inside
- Scowling, directing antagonistic facial expressions toward others
- Mind reading or assuming you know what others think or feel

DOs

- Use brief statements of 10 words or less
- Use "I" statements, i.e. "I feel ____" or take responsibility for your own emotions, thoughts and actions
- Use direct and specific statements, i.e. "Stop teasing your sister/brother"
- Actively listen with good eye contact, leaning forward and nodding
- Let each person completely state his/her thoughts before stating your own
- Give feedback or paraphrase, i.e., re-state what another has said to you
- Be constructive, i.e. "I'm concerned about your grades" or "Something is bothering me – can we discuss it?"
- Use a neutral and natural tone of voice
- Say what you mean specifically and straightforwardly
- Stay on one topic
- Focus on the here and now
- Match verbal and non-verbal communication, i.e. saying "I love you" while smiling
- Express feelings to others appropriately
- Use appropriate facial expressions toward others
- Really listen to others' point of view and ask questions to make sure you understand

