



**SESSION ONE: EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION**

SESSION ONE: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication in any relationship is as important as breathing to a human being in order to survive. The moment you stop breathing, it is a matter of time before you pass out. In the absence of communication, any relationship will eventually wilt and die.

One of the most important relationships that God gave us, is that with our little ones. Our ability to communicate with our little ones determines the quality of the relationship and what they will become eventually.

How often have we barked out instructions like:

“Jump off the couch”

“Pick that up.”

“Stop being mean to your brother.”

“I told you to listen.”

with no positive response from the kids.

Too often we are quick to throw in the towel.

You need to realise that children misbehave for different reasons:

- Parents may not have expressed their expectations clearly enough — or
- Parents may have fallen into a pattern of inconsistent enforcement of those expectations.

It is vitally important that as parents, we master the art of clarifying expectations when we communicate. Children thrive when parents have clear expectations for behaviour and enforce those standards consistently.

Effective communication is defined as *verbal speech or other methods of relaying information that get a point across. An example of effective communication is when you talk in clear and simple terms.*

How do we go about effective communication with our littles ones?

1. Establish values that shape behaviour

1.1 What are values?

- *Important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable*
- Values have a major influence on a person's behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations.
- Defined values come handy when it comes to ensure that you are heard when issuing instructions.
- This means that as children grow, they are taught about the values.
- If you are a Christian family, your values would be anchored in the word of God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

1.2 Write down your values

- Some families may choose to write out and frame a mission statement
- Writing down things provides clarity; it creates opportunity for performance - as parents, we find that having our family's values clearly defined up front makes it easier to enforce rules and stick to consequences.
- Examples of values
 - Respect for yourself and for others
 - Consider others more than yourself
 - Be the first one to say I am sorry
- In the absence of clear guiding principles, it becomes chaotic in the house.

Our family values

	VALUE	REASON WHY
1		
2		
3		
4		

1.3 The importance of establishing values for your kids:

- It anchors them – they are clear about how to respond to situations
- Articulate them in a simple and exciting manner – must be easy to live out or to remember
- Over a period of time, discuss each value before bed time – allow them to express their understanding of the value
- With every occurrence, find a way of bringing up the practice of the value – how a value applies to the situation. Use opportunities to reinforce the values
- Be the model by living out the values – be vulnerable enough to concede when you have violated one of the espoused values.

2. Anchor expectations in day to day life

Without realising it, we can easily expect our children to be super kids, perfect kids in whom there is no mess.

2.1 Our children are not perfect

- We feel embarrassed when they cry
- We lose it when they stumble over themselves or when they wear pants inside out
- We are impatient when they fail to clean the bath tub properly
- Now this is the key to effective communication - Keep your expectations anchored in reality,
 - to anticipate mistakes and even foresee some misbehaviour – your kids are not angels.

2.1 Have a healthy view of what is normal behaviour in every stage of growth:

- We often overestimate their ability to have self-control, to stay focused on a task and to handle social situations well.
- It's normal for a 2-year-old to get upset if he doesn't get something he wants;
- it's normal for a 3-year-old to lose it if there's a change in his bedtime routine;
- it's normal for a 5-year-old to daydream in the middle of a T-ball game;
- it's normal for a 12-year-old to be moody; it's normal for a teenager to be irresponsible every once in a while.

- Anchoring your expectations in reality does not mean disobedience is ok – what are signs of disobedience:
 - Deliberate violation of a known principle or behaviour

2.2 Expectations must be preceded by relevant training

- Create room in your heart for the odd surprises when they fail at those things
- Making mistakes is part of how our kids' brains develop.
- Use these mistakes as launching grounds for further learning.
- Our responses to their mistakes and poor choices must encourage that natural maturing process.

3. Train up your children – they don't know better

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

3.1 Why do children need training

- Children are born with a nature inclined to sin (Ps. 51:5).
- Children are born without knowledge (Pro. 22:15).
- Children are impressionable and imitators of others (Ezek. 16:44).
- Children are vulnerable (Mt. 10:16).
- Children have unlimited potential.

- Children are the carriers of culture (Ps. 78:4-8; 145:4).

3.2 You have no right to expect what you have not trained them in

- Training children is the one way of building up children's work ethic.
- Training up a child is different from child abuse – our training must be age appropriate and must still ensure that they enjoy their childhood

3.3 How do you go about this?

- Give them age-appropriate chores to accomplish each day.
- Encourage them to take initiative in helping beyond their chore list.
- It's often faster and easier to just straighten their beds or vacuum their room ourselves. - Exercise patience
- Use the "Let's do it together" approach – this is the only way to remove the inability excuse.
 - Training will include:
 - Repetition
 - gentle correction and
 - practice before children can succeed.
- Don't aim for perfection but them doing their best

- Focus on what they are getting right – affirm them

4. When and how to correct

- Sometimes we want to take pain away from our children – your heart sinks when they cry or they are sad; doesn't it
- The reality is that missing the mark is engrained in their hearts
 - We don't go out of our way to teach how be selfish but we see selfish tendencies

4.1 Where do we have the pattern for correction?

God Himself, as our Heavenly Father, furnishes the best and primary example of all discipline (Deut 8:5).

- God disciplines His children out of love (Pro. 3:11-12; 13:24; Heb. 12:5-6; Rev. 3:19).
- God disciplines because He is faithful to us (Ps. 119:75).
- God disciplines as a form of instruction (Ps. 94:12, NIV; Ps. 119:71).
- God disciplines but afterward re-establishes His love to us (Job 5:18; Jer. 31:18-20; Ps. 89:32-33).
- Love + Discipline = Happy Functional Children
- Correction correctly applied builds the child's esteem, the child feels more secure and happier

4.2 What are we seeking to instil into the lives of our children?

- minimize their negative tendencies,
- emphasize the positive
- help our kids discover and follow God's plan.

Scripture says discipline is the key. If a parent does not discipline, a child is likely to suffer dire consequences (Proverbs 5:23), whereas a disciplined child will bring peace and delight to a family (Proverbs 29:17).

- We have to outlast, outthink and outmanoeuvre our children and their inborn bent to foolishness.
- How does consistent discipline look like:
 - when we are tired,
 - when we are preoccupied,
 - when we are frustrated or angry,
 - when we would rather be relaxing.
 - Apply the same measure for the same offense for the different children
- The following principles will help you ensure that your discipline is consistent and fair:
 - **Create capacity that enables correct behaviour.**
 - Never punish for something a child didn't know was wrong. To do so would be unjust.

- Differentiate between childishness and defiance – never punish a child for being a child
 - Allow/tolerate childish behaviour – never make a child to feel guilty for spilling milk as a result of being naturally clumsy.
- **Exercise appropriate and relevant punishment**
 - Don't burn the house in order to kill an ant - A small infraction should be met with a small form of correction
 - A big wrongdoing should be met with more stringent correction.
 - Don't pass on punishment to another parent especially if they were not present – this erodes your authority over the child. You have relevant information to decide on the appropriateness of the punishment.
- **Establish guidelines**
 - Establish the child's personal responsibility. Have them tell you what they did wrong.
 - Don't ask, "Did you do that?" You are giving them the opportunity to lie. Now you have two sins with which to deal.
 - Don't ask, "Why did you do that?" You are giving them an opportunity to make up an excuse. Now you will have to judge the excuse.

- Do ask, “What did you do that was wrong?” Now you are giving them an opportunity to confess and at the same time you are reinforcing the original instruction.
- Explain again to the child the reason for discipline.
- Before you correct them, sit in silence for a few seconds for their personal reflection.
- Correct with a rod, a neutral object (Pro. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; 23:13-14).
- Never use your hand. You use your hands to show love.
 - Never use the “eye for the eye” method (biting, pinching, pulling hair, scratching, slapping, etc.),
- Apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge.
- Correct firmly and do not let his or her crying stop you (Pro. 19:18; 20:30).
- Do not over correct – no more than is necessary.
- Show love afterward without nullifying discipline.
- Do not degrade the child; encourage him or her in right behavior patterns.
- Pray with your child and help him or her to pray for forgiveness.
- The child needs to understand that they have not just offended or sinned against you, they have sinned against God. They need to ask for

forgiveness from all offended parties. This will help build into them a God consciousness that will serve them for the rest of their life.

- If there is a need for restitution, have the child do it.
- They need to follow through on the original instruction, apologize to offended parties, replace what was damaged or give back what was taken.
- Be consistent!