

PRIDE

PARENT RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Developed by:
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Effective Communication Skills

Purpose:

The purpose of this training is to provide participants the opportunity to improve their communication skills. This will enable them to more effectively communicate with the children under their care and with those sharing responsibility for the well being of the child.

Learning Objectives:

Participants should be able to:

- ◆ Understand general components of the communication process;
- ◆ Identify non-verbal communicative behaviors;
- ◆ Compare benefits of one-way and two-way communication;
- ◆ Identify barriers to effective communication;
- ◆ Improve active listening skills;
- ◆ Increase self-awareness of personal communicative behaviors.

Effective Communication Skills

Purpose and Objectives

Part I General Communicative Concepts

- A. Activity Number 1, Draw a Penny Exercised
- B. Definition of Communication
- C. Activity Number 2, Completing the Self-Assessment Instrument
- D. Understanding the Communication Process
- E. Activity Number 3, The Rumor Clinic

Part II Elements of the Communication Process

- A. Nonverbal Communication
 - 1. Categories
 - 2. Functions
 - 3. Activity Number 4, Understanding Nonverbal Signals
- B. Activity Number 5, Comparing One-Way and Two-Way Communication
- C. Listening and Feedback
 - 1. Components of Listening
 - a. Sensing
 - b. Interpreting
 - c. Evaluating
 - d. Retaining and Responding
 - 2. Suggestions for Effective Listening
 - 3. Feedback
 - 4. Barriers to Effective Communication
 - a. An Illustration
 - b. Sender Caused Barriers
 - c. Receiver Caused Barriers
 - d. Organizational Barriers

e. Communication Barriers with Adolescents

Part III Developing Communication Skills

A. Active Listening

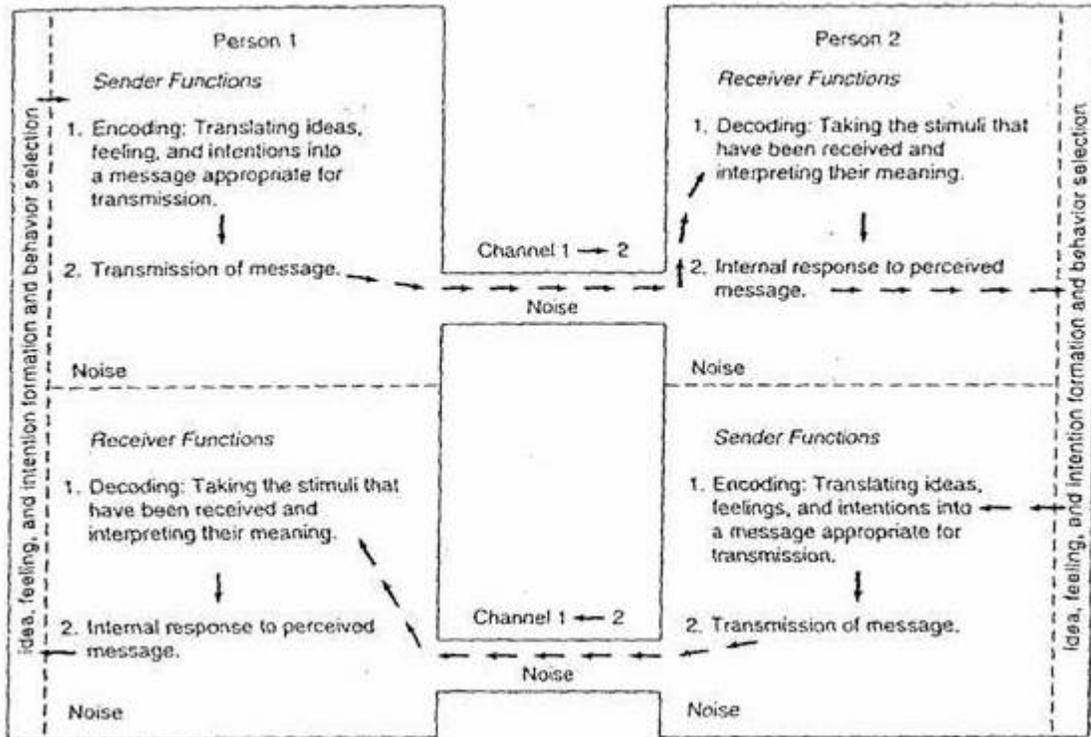
1. Activity Number 6, Las Cruces News Release
2. Becoming an Active Listener
3. Hints for Active Listening
4. Activity Number 7 Practicing Communication Responses

B. Using “I” Messages

C. Activity Number 8, Demonstrating Competent Communication

D. Understanding the Communication Process

Describe the communication process as shown in the following illustration.



(David Johnson)

The sender decides what messages he/she intends to send. Encoding refers to the way this message gets packaged to be sent. Here the feelings, ideas, intentions, and skill of the sender help form the message. Noise may interfere with the message. Noise is any form of distraction interfering with the message as it goes from sender to receiver. The receiver decodes the message. This means he/she is figuring out what was intended. The receiver has an internal response to the message and this usually gets encoded into the returned message. The process is repeated, as the receiver becomes the sender.

Sending of a message involves:

- ◆ Determination of the words to use
- ◆ How the words will be put together
- ◆ The tone of voice used
- ◆ The rate of our speech
- ◆ Non-Verbal aspects

Our understanding of what we hear is shaped by:

- ◆ The communication climate
- ◆ Context and setting
- ◆ Our background and experiences
- ◆ Knowledge
- ◆ Mood
- ◆ Values, beliefs and culture

Elements of the Communication Process

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal messages are communication triggers that spring from our behavior in the presence of others. They are present even when we behave unintentionally. Most writers believe that at least two-thirds of our communication is nonverbal. Some have suggested that the percentage should be up to 90 percent. Nonverbal messages communicate our desires, intentions, attitudes, orientations, roles, responses, and feelings.

I. Categories of Nonverbal Communication

Environment: Includes the physical setting with such things as color, size, room temperature, lighting, and general surroundings. Ex. (No ashtrays in the house)

Proxemics: Refers to the placement of individuals in relation to each other. This is influenced by the circumstances and by your relationship with the person. Where you seat yourself in the room and how close you stand to someone when you are talking with them are examples of proxemics.

Chronemics: Includes our orientation to issues of time. This gets reflected in how we treat schedules, use clocks, calendars, keep appointments, and the extent to which we are usually prompt or tardy. Our use of time does communicate something about us. Ex. Are you usually early, late or on time?

Paralanguage: Refers to the way things are said. This includes focal qualities like range, pitch, rhythm, and rate. There are many vocalizations we use that do not involve words. Some of these are laughing, crying, sighing, pausing, and emphasizing. Ex. How evident is paralanguage in your communication?

Facial Expressions: Our feelings are primarily communicated through our facial expressions. We can smile, frown, tighten our facial muscles and look strained, or show almost no reaction at all. Our eyes are constantly communication. Eye contact is also a critical part of facial expressions. The amount of eye contact is influenced by our culture. Do you think you can tell when someone is lying by looking at his or her eyes? Eye contact signals power relationships in groups. Research shows that we tend to look toward status equals or status superiors when we are around a group of people.

Kinesics: Refers to the study of body movements and how these movements influence the messages. Our general posture, our gestures, our use of hands and limbs are the more significant elements to this process.

II. Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Go over each of these and ask participants to give examples of how they might have used these.

Repeating: We use nonverbal messages to reinforce what we have said. We might point as we tell someone directions.

Contradicting: We may say one thing verbally while sending nonverbal messages that we mean something else.

Substituting: We might use a gesture in place of words with the meaning in the nonverbal being more intense than the words. An example might be a “thumbs up” to a child who just completed a task.

Complementing: The nonverbal will be used to add meaning to what is being said. You might hold up an object and say this is really interesting. You might take a drink and say this drink is very refreshing.

Accenting: This is the use of nonverbal to provide emphasis of a point. You might raise your voice at someone you are angry with. A frown will signal disapproval of a child’s behavior. The nonverbal is intended to add power to the verbal.

Regulating: We use nonverbal actions to have an immediate impact on another person. Looking at your watch while someone is talking will usually have a negative effect on the person talking. Staring at a misbehaving child usually means, “I don’t like what you are doing.”

Listening and Feedback

Listening is as important as speaking. Parents readily work to teach children how to speak with little emphasis on listening skills. We spend much more time listening than talking. The importance of listening skills is recognized in the business world and supervisors and managers are taught effective listening skills. Working with children requires skillful listening at both the verbal and nonverbal level.

I. Components of Listening

(a) Sensing (Hearing)

Hearing is the physical process of receiving aural stimuli. It is a non-selective process. The only way we can control the hearing of sounds is to physically block the sound waves from your ears. Sensing is more selective than hearing. It involves a voluntary act on our part to choose certain sounds and noises to pay attention to.

Selective Attention is when we choose one message over another. We may focus on points we want to hear or on things that have importance to us.

Noise is a term referring to the interference between the spoken message and what is heard. The noise can be external, such as talking loud tv, poor acoustics, etc. Internal noise refers to things within us or about us, such as our emotional state, prejudices, likes or dislikes, etc.

(b) Interpreting the Message

When we listen to someone, we filter our interpretations through our attitudes, assumptions, needs, experiences, fears, goals, educational background and our current emotional state. Consider the following illustration:

“A small boy is involved in a serious automobile accident in which his father, who was driving the car, is killed instantly. The boy is rushed to an emergency room and the attending doctor looks at him and says, oh, this is my son!” How is this possible? The answer is that the doctor is his mother. (Harris and Sherblom). This illustration shows us that we sometime add our own interpretation to the meaning of the message.

(c) Evaluating the Message Content

The listener forms a judgment based upon the information received. This involves asking yourself questions like: Do you trust the information? Is it worth a response? Is there evidence to support what is being said?

(d) Retaining and Responding

We will not remember most of what we hear. Our minds work in such a way that we can store to long-term memory the things we want or need to retain. There is never a guarantee that this will not be lost. Repetition is one technique to help store information for the long term.

II. Suggestions for Effective Listening

- ◆ Judge the content, not the messenger;
- ◆ Ask for clarification as needed;
- ◆ Minimize distractions;
- ◆ Paraphrase what the person is saying;
- ◆ Respond in ways that show you are interested;

- ◆ Observe nonverbal cues;
- ◆ Don't control the conversation;
- ◆ Acknowledge what is being said;
- ◆ Don't overreact to emotional words;
- ◆ Look at the person as they are speaking;
- ◆ React to the message, not the person. (<http://www.cba.neu.edu>)

III. Feedback

Providing feedback is a critical part of effective communication. Feedback has been effective when the sender knows we have listened, interpreted accurately, and understood what was stated. Feedback includes all the *ways* we respond to the person. This includes our verbal and nonverbal responses. Our actions following the conversation also represent a form of feedback. If we forget to do something we told someone we would do, we are giving feedback that might be interpreted as lack of interest or commitment.

Suggestions for Constructive Feed back:

- ◆ Own your messages and speak for yourself. Avoid use of we, they, some people, most people, and use "I" to communicate what you are thinking or feeling;
- ◆ Phrase the feedback as a statement, not a question. Consider the following statements:
 "Can you quit making all that noise?"
 "I am trying to hear the rest of this program, would you please quit making that noise?"
- ◆ Base the feedback on facts. Avoid hearsay, rumor, and unsubstantiated conclusions;
- ◆ Provide both positive and negative feedback;
- ◆ Avoid accusations;
- ◆ Share your reactions;
- ◆ Be open to discussing alternatives;
- ◆ Be as specific as possible;
- ◆ Stay focused on the behavior, not the person;

- ◆ Focus on behavior that the person might have some control over;
- ◆ Give an amount of feedback the person can handle, not all you want to give;
- ◆ Consider timing of the feedback. There may be inappropriate times for offering feedback;
- ◆ Check the listeners understanding of your feedback.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Sender Caused Barriers

- ◆ Not clear about the goals for the message
- ◆ Incorrectly assumes the receiver has the knowledge to understand
- ◆ Uses incorrect communication medium;
- ◆ Not giving adequate chance for receiving feedback;
- ◆ Misinterprets feedback;
- ◆ Uses language causing the sender to stop listening;
- ◆ Cultural differences.

Receiver Caused Barriers

- ◆ Being a poor listener, observer;
- ◆ Jumping to conclusions;
- ◆ Hears what he/she wants to hear;
- ◆ Rejecting messages, which contradict his/her own beliefs and opinions;
- ◆ Emotional state.
- ◆ Cultural differences.

Organizational Barriers

- ◆ Closed climate;

- ◆ Top-heavy structure;
- ◆ Lack of trust;
- ◆ Rivalry;
- ◆ Power and status issues.

Communication Barriers with Adolescents

- ◆ Mistrust adults and authority figures
- ◆ Questions adults' ability to understand them
- ◆ Fear of revealing vulnerabilities
- ◆ High regard for privacy
- ◆ Feeling of bowing as much as adults
- ◆ Parental involvement often viewed as negative

Becoming an Active Listener

Active listening is a skill you can acquire if:

- ◆ You really want to hear what the speaker is saying
- ◆ You believe what the speaker has to say is important to him/her and you want to help with whatever problem they have;
- ◆ You genuinely accept their feelings, whatever they are;
- ◆ You have a feeling of trust in the person's capacity to eventually work through their feelings and find a solution.

You can practice active listening if you:

- ◆ Listen with a purpose;
- ◆ Listen with your senses;
- ◆ Allow the other person plenty of time to speak;

- ◆ Accept emotion;
- ◆ Respond to feelings;
- ◆ Show understanding.

Active Listening Techniques

- ◆ Focus on paying attention;
- ◆ Don't think ahead about what you are going to say;
- ◆ Don't interrupt;
- ◆ Listen for feelings underneath the words;
- ◆ Keep an open mind;
- ◆ Encourage the speaker to continue;
- ◆ Maintain eye contact;
- ◆ Lean forward showing you are listening;
- ◆ Check to see if you are hearing correctly by mirroring what was said
- ◆ Be honest about your feelings and what you are thinking
- ◆ Use "I" messages
- ◆ Reflect the other person's feelings

Using I Messages

The use of “I” messages will improve the effectiveness of your communication. “I” messages allow us to tell people the impact their behavior has on us. “You” messages sound like blaming or name-calling and may cause others to stop listening and to defend themselves.

The first part of using “I” messages is to identify the specific behavior, situation, or problem you are responding to. An example is:

(You message) You don’t care a bit about this house; you always make a mess and never clean up.

(I message) Every night for the last five nights when I get home from work the living room is a mess with toys, newspaper, and coffee cups sitting around.

The second part of the “I” message is the feeling the problem or situation causes you. An example is:

(You message) You make me so angry; I’m disgusted with you.

(I message) When I come home and find the living room a mess, I feel frustrated, tired, and angry.

The third part of the “I” message is to state the consequences that the situation has for you and the resulting feelings. An example is:

(You message) You are so lazy and don’t care a thing about me. I’m sick and tired of being the servant around here.

(I message) When I get angry over the room being so messy, I say things that I might regret because I’m so angry.

COMMUNICATION PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES

Activity #1

What content would be most helpful to you in this session? Why?

Activity #2

Read the list of statements and mark each item to show whether you think you are at the right level, should do it more often, or should do it less. When finished, go back over the list and circle the three or four skills that would be most valuable for you to improve at this time.

	Do Less	Right Level	Do More
Expressing information, ideas, suggestions			
Being brief and concise, getting to the point.	_____	_____	_____
Being forceful and definite, not hesitant or apologetic.	_____	_____	_____
Talking in specifics, giving examples and details.	_____	_____	_____
Talking in generalizations, principles, explanations.	_____	_____	_____
Expressing feelings			
Letting Others Know:			
When I do not understand something they have said.	_____	_____	_____
When I like something they have said or done.	_____	_____	_____
When I disagree with them.	_____	_____	_____
When I think they have changed the subject or are irrelevant.	_____	_____	_____
When I am getting irritated.	_____	_____	_____
When I feel hurt, embarrassed or put down by something they have said or done.	_____	_____	_____

Communication/Participant Activities (continued)
Activity #2 (continued)

	Do Less	Right Level	Do More
Understanding information, ideas and suggestions of others			
Listening to understand instead of preparing an answer.	_____	_____	_____
Helping others to participate in the discussion.	_____	_____	_____
Checking to make sure do understand what others mean before agreeing or disagreeing.	_____	_____	_____
Summarizing points of disagreement and agreement.	_____	_____	_____
Asking questions in ways that elicit more information than “yes” or “no.”	_____	_____	_____
Understanding and responding to others’ feelings			
Checking out what I think others are feeling not assuming I know.	_____	_____	_____
Responding to someone who is angry with rue in such a way that I do not ignore her/his feelings.	_____	_____	_____
Responding to someone who is expressing closeness and affection for me in such a way that I do not ignore her/his feelings.	_____	_____	_____
Surveying a group to determine how much agreement exists (in making a group decision).	_____	_____	_____
Observing Self			
Talking in group discussions.	_____	_____	_____
Getting feedback, encouraging others to let me know how my actions affect them.	_____	_____	_____
Being aware when I am trying to cope with my own feelings of discomfort.	_____	_____	_____
Being able to stand silence.	_____	_____	_____
Being able to stand tension and conflict.	_____	_____	_____
Accepting help from others.	_____	_____	_____
Offering help to others.	_____	_____	_____
Yielding to others, giving in to others.	_____	_____	_____
Standing up for myself.	_____	_____	_____
Being protective of others.	_____	_____	_____

Activity Number 4

Nonverbal Communication of Attitudes

Defensiveness

Suspicion

Frustration

Nervousness

Insecurity

Evaluation

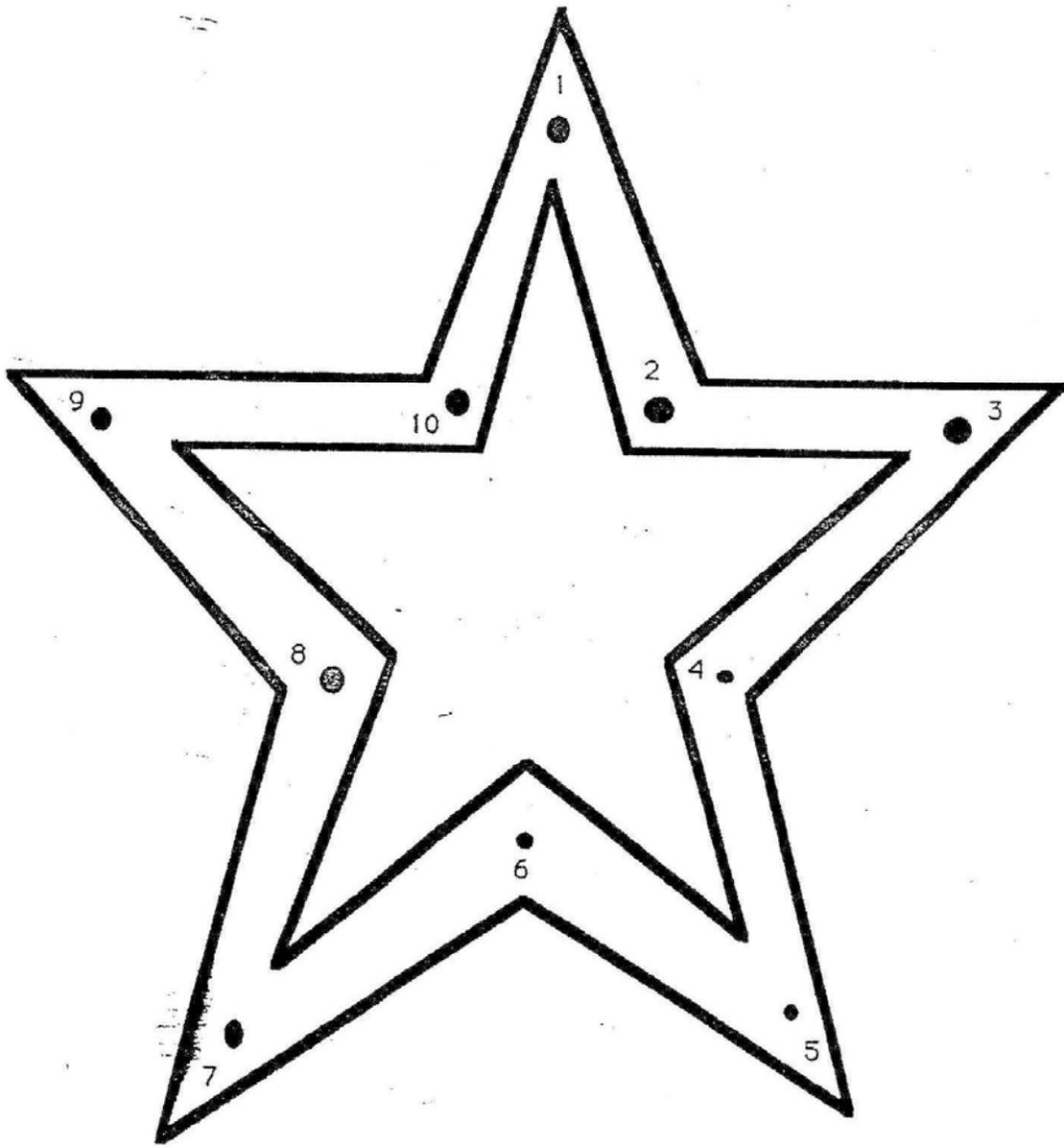
Confidence

Cooperation

Openness

Activity Number 4

Defensiveness	Suspicion	Frustration	Nervousness	Insecurity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Arms crossed on chest ◆ Crossing legs ◆ Fistlike gestures ◆ Pointing index finger ◆ Karate chops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Arms crossed ◆ Sideways glance ◆ Touching, rubbing nose ◆ Rubbing eyes ◆ Buttoning coat – drawing away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Short breaths ◆ “Tsk” sound ◆ Tightly clenched hands ◆ Wringing hands ◆ Fistlike gestures ◆ Pointing index finger ◆ Rubbing hand through hair ◆ Rubbing back of neck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clearing throat ◆ “Whew” sound ◆ Whistling ◆ Cigarette smoking ◆ Picking or pinching flesh ◆ Fidgeting In hair ◆ Hand covering mouth while speaking ◆ Not looking at other person ◆ Tugging at pants while seated ◆ Jingling money in pockets ◆ Tugging at ear ◆ Perspiration, wringing of hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pinching flesh ◆ Chewing pen, pencil ◆ Thumb over thumb, rubbing ◆ Biting fingernails ◆ Hands in pockets
Evaluation	Confidence	Cooperation	Openness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hand-to-face features ◆ Head tilted ◆ Stroking chin ◆ Peering over glasses ◆ Taking glasses off – cleaning ◆ Glasses earpiece in mouth ◆ Pipe smoker gestures ◆ Putting hand to bridge of nose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Steeple hands ◆ Hands behind back ◆ Back stiffened ◆ Hands in coat pockets with thumbs out ◆ Hands on lapels of coat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Upper body in sprinter’s position ◆ Open hands ◆ Sitting on edge of chair ◆ Hand-to-face gestures ◆ Unbuttoning coat ◆ Tilted head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Open hands ◆ Unbuttoned coat 	



COMMUNICATION
PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES
Las Cruces News Release

ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISE

Mark the following True (T), False (F) or Unknown (U).

1. _____ Mrs. Williams was shot five times in the chest.
2. _____ The state headquarters of the Dirt Diggers Motorcycle Club is in Las Cruces.
3. _____ Four men were inside the clubhouse at the time of the shooting.
4. _____ Two men were standing outside at the time of the shooting.
5. _____ Ms. Williams' boyfriend called the police.
6. _____ Ms. Williams lost a lot of blood.
7. _____ Two of the people at the table were from Las Cruces.
8. _____ A 45-caliber slug was found inside the building.
9. _____ The men who fired the shots were seen going north on Main Street.
10. _____ The car the assailants were driving had its lights on.
11. _____ Ms. Williams' boyfriend shot her.
12. _____ The witnesses said they heard what sounded like a cap gun.

Credit: Sue C. Bodkin, Extension Program Specialist-Home Economics
New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico, March, 1984.

IS MY CHILD'S SPEECH OR LANGUAGE DELAYED?

Carolyn A. Weiner, M.A., C.C.C.

Parents are often the first adults to notice a possible delay in their child's speech or language development. 'Your child's speech may not be clear. Or, your child may use shorter sentences than other children the same age. This observation generally leads to three questions:

Is my child's speech or language delayed?

Speech skills are different from language skills. Language refers to the use of words and sentences to convey ideas. Speech is the production of sounds that make up the words and sentences.

Using developmental milestones, such as those listed below, you can compare your child's development with that of other children the same age. Read the description and ask yourself the questions listed. You can get an idea if your child's communication skills are about the same higher than, or lower than expected.

Use caution when applying any measure development to your child. Individual differences or special circumstances need to be accounted for. This can be done by consulting with your school's *speech and language clinician* or by checking with your local speech and hearing clinic.

Milestones of Speech and Language Development

- One-year-old children should be able to understand a variety of words and should be using a few single words.
- By age two, words should be combined into two-and three-word phrases and sentences.
- Between the ages of three and five, children learn to carry on a conversation, ask and answer questions, follow and give directions, and speak alone in the presence a group. These skills are important to success in kindergarten.
- After age five, sentences become increasingly complex. Children begin using words like "when," "while," and "since" to relate two or more ideas in a single sentence. The language level used by teachers and textbooks assumes

that children have this skill by the age of seven or eight.

- As a rule, children use understandable speech by age four and use all speech sounds correctly by age five to seven.

At what point should I be concerned about my child's development?

Both social and academic success depend on well-developed speech and language skills. Your child may be having difficulty developing these skills if:

1. Your child has experienced ear infections or unusually long stay (six months or more) in the hospital.
2. The child is not understood by playmates or others outside the immediate family.
3. The child is frustrated when trying to communicate and the situation does not improve over a one- or two-month period.
4. There is a delay of one year or more in developing speech and language skills. For example, here is a sample of normal language development (compiled by Beth Witt):

Three-year-old:

- Says only one or two words at a time.
- Cannot answer "what" or "who" questions.
- Speech is not comprehensible except in context.
- Does not seem to hear or understand all that is said4 seems to "tune out" what others say.
- Does not start conversations. Speaks only when spoken to.
- Does not understand spoken directions without visual assistance from pointing and other gestures.
- Repeats what others say rather than responding.

Four-year-old:

- Talks in only two- or three-word phrases. Word order is poor.
- Cannot answer simple "what:" "where," or "why" questions.

REASONS FOR DELAYED SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

Elizabeth M. Prather, Ph.D.

What is the cause of your child's speech problem?

Finding the exact cause or causes of your child's speech problem can be difficult. Each child's speech is influenced by many factors, including the ability to hear, the physical development of the mouth and throat, and the abilities the child inherits. The most common causes of delayed speech development are:

1. Hearing Loss

One major cause of delayed speech is hearing loss. Even mild and temporary losses, caused by ear infections or allergies, can slow a child's development. Children learn to speak by hearing others speak. When they do not hear speech correctly, they cannot learn to talk correctly. For example, the words "cat," "hat," "sat," "fat;" "that," "pat," "bat," and "chat" may all sound the same to a hearing impaired child, if your child's speech is delayed, see an audiologist (a specialist in testing hearing).

2. Mouth Deformities

Deformities, or physical defects, in the mouth can cause speech problems. Children born with cleft palates or other mouth deformities need special help and medical attention. Fortunately; structural problems bad enough to affect a child's speech are very rare.

3. Mouth Movements

Many children with delayed speech development have trouble learning to move their lips, tongue, and jaws properly. Just as some children walk, run, and play ball awkwardly, some children cannot control their mouth movements as well as others. A few of these children may not chew their food well, and may sometimes choke when they swallow. Some children drool because they have trouble swallowing. Your speech and language clinician can help you learn more about your child's mouth movements during speech.

4. Language Delay

Children may have difficulty leaning the meaning of words and how to use words in sentences. This language delay will cause speech problems as well.

Learning to talk is very complicated. It includes learning:

- The meaning and use of words
- How to combine words into phrases and sentences
- How to produce the speech sounds
- Combining sounds to say words and sentences

Some children have difficulty learning the rules for combining speech sounds. Errors like "pasghetti" for "spaghetti" are made by a child who knows how to say sounds, but does not where the sounds belong in words.

Have you ever tried to learn a foreign language? It is very difficult to master a new language. Yet, we expect children to learn our language in an incredibly short period of time! It is not surprising that some children need extra time or special help.

5. Language Disorders

Sometimes speech problems are part of a more serious language disorder. The speech problem considered less important than the language problem. First, the child needs help to understand and express ideas. Later the child can learn to say sounds correctly. Usually, as the child learns language, speech also becomes clearer. Speech and language clinicians can help these children improve both language and speech skills.

6. Genetic Inheritance

It is common for late speech development to run in families. One or both parents, or any number of aunts and uncles, may have had speech problems when they were young. But children with slow speech development do not always have parents who had the same problem. And parents who had speech problems will not necessarily "pass them on" to all of their children. Genetic inheritance is a strong, but not inevitable, factor in late speech development.

7. Bad Speech Habits

Many actions, including walking and talking, become automatic with time and practice. Sometimes when children are beginning to speak, they say sounds incorrectly.

TALKING WITH A CHILD WHO SHUTTERS

Daniel DeJoy, Ph.D.

The way parents communicate with their child very important. Most parents talk with youngsters in a way that helps them to pay attention, understand what is said, and use what they have heard. Parents can give extra help to child who stutters. The child who has difficulty learning to talk needs more patience and encouragement. But the results are well worth it!

What is stuttering?

Learning to talk is not always easy. Some children have difficulty combining sounds into words. They repeat or prolong the beginning sounds of many words. These repetitions and prolongations are called disfluencies, because they break up the smooth flow of speech.

Disfluencies may be accompanied by tightness in the speech muscles, changes in the pitch or loudness of the voice, or a look of fear. Frequent occurrence of these stressful types of disfluencies is called “stuttering.”

Why does stuttering develop?

Some authorities believe that stuttering develops when children try to avoid disfluencies that listeners have criticized or tried to correct. Also, it has been suggested that stuttering may develop when a child feels pressure to talk faster, respond more quickly, or speak more perfectly.

But pressure does not have to come from the listener. Some children are very sensitive and “put pressure on themselves” These youngsters can be quite disfluent despite a pressure-free listening environment. Also, some children have immature speech and language skills. Almost any interaction strains their speaking abilities. It is quite possible that a combination of reasons, some coming from the child and some from the listening environment, influence the patterns of a child’s disfluencies.

How can parents reduce pressure on their child?

Is your child rushing to keep up with your speaking rate? Do you think and speak very quickly? Your young child may have trouble keeping up. The child may feel rushed to take turn in conversation,

for fear of being “left out.” If so, the child may seem in a hurry all the time.

You can help the child who stutters to develop a “leisurely” attitude toward talking. The goal is for the child to view talking as easy rather than difficult. It is often helpful for parents to model speech that is slower in rate and easy in movement. A trained speech clinician can help parents learn this new way of talking with their child. The child who has “copied” a faster speaking rate may then, in time, begin to imitate a new model of slow, easy speech.

How can parents help their child in conversation?

1. Pause to give your child a little “breathing room” after the child finishes a sentence.

Delay briefly before commenting on what the child has just said. If your child thinks of something else to say, the child can begin without the need to rush.

2. Allow your child to finish words and sentences without interruption.

Don’t interrupt a moment of disfluency to complete the word for the child. Such interruptions over time may put the child under even greater time pressure to “get the word out.”

3. Set up family rules for turn-taking at meals and other family gatherings.

Give everyone a chance to speak without interruptions.

4. Set aside a special time each day to be alone with your child.

This is especially helpful for children with immature speech and language skills. During this one-to-one interaction, you can model a slower rate of speech while the child has an important adult’s undivided attention. With a clinician’s help, parents can plan the conversation the child’s level of language, speech, and fluency. For example, you can read a book and ask questions about the story or pictures that require short, simple, predictable answers.

USING LANGUAGE TO GET RESULTS

M. Ann Marquis, M.S., C.C.C.

Why do children communicate?
To get what they want!

Nonverbal Communication

The first step in influencing others is to get their attention. Before children learn to talk, parents respond to gestures, cries, or even sounds like grunts and moans. For example, pointing to a cookie is good communication for the child who can't say "cookie."

Children first learn to influence others by using nonverbal communication. A baby's cry for example, is a request (or demand) for attention. It can bring a parent from another room. Crying is often a successful way to influence others.

Nonverbal communication, like speech, must be learned by trial and error and by getting results. Nonverbal communication is successful when parents do what children want them to do. Children often use the following nonverbal behaviors:

Child's Behavior	Child's Goal
Long Sound	Asking for people, objects, animals
Abrupt, short sound	Getting attention
Look, grasp, point to or objects	Getting person, people
Cry	object Seeking comfort or food
Shakes head	Rejecting food, object, person

Verbal Communication

By the time children approach two years, the use of nonverbal communication should be giving way to using words. Words are much more effective. Instead of just pointing to a desired cookie, the child says "cookie." As the child develops more language, the pointing usually disappears because it is easier to just say "cookie."

Children who have difficulty learning language may continue to use nonverbal communication. They will fall back on gestures and sounds if their verbal requests are not understood. If using language is difficult for your child and whining, crying, and gestures get results, there is little reason to talk. Children talk in order to get what they want. If

your child can get a cookie pointing to it, there really is no need to say "cookie." How can parents encourage children who prefer not to talk? Here is an example:

Child's Behavior

1. Points at cookie.
2. Continues to point, and grunts.
3. Says "tu."

Parent's Language

"What do you want?"
"Do you want a cookie?"
"Tell me cookie."
"Yes, cookie. Here's your cookie."

In this sequence, the parent required an attempt at saying "cookie" before fulfilling the request. If the child could actually say "cookie," the parent would have asked for the correct word before delivering the cookie. Did you notice that the parent used the word "cookie" four times? By using the word in several different sentences it was clear which word was appropriate.

From Words to Conversation

The next stage for children who are learning to control their environment is to combine words. Just as you expected your child to say words instead of pointing, soon you can expect "orange juice" instead of "juice." In any stage of development, parents can help children control their lives by using language.

Children with language problems often need help labeling things and people. Words like "this" or "that," "here" or "there" are common in our language. But they have no meaning unless you know what your child is referring to. For example; a request like "I want that" is confusing if you don't know what "that" is. Whenever your child's communication is confusing, ask, "What do you want?"

How can you encourage conversation? Do things together with your child. "Talk about what you're doing." Create new situations for conversations. Everything you do together is worth talking about. "Take turns when talking." Use short sentences. Use language that is only slightly more difficult than your child uses.

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