

3-5-15 Communication

This is the universal weak area. I'm going to teach you principles. You guys think I walk on water because you assume that I do everything I teach you. I may know it's true, but I don't always live them.

This is the foundation of relationships with your children, husband, Heavenly Father, and co-workers.

The problem we have in communicating is that all of us are born in this world being selfish. Babies come totally self-focused. They are supposed to be. It's an ok thing. Unfortunately some of us never out grow it.

Adult temper tantrums are silent treatments. You withdraw affection with a child that has been ornery. I don't want to say anything rotten to them so I just won't say anything.

I have to understand my feelings...being mad at the child...why am I angry and why is the 3 year old controlling me. Who is acting like the adult? Then you have to learn how self-discipline comes in and then very appropriately you need to learn how to express those emotions even if they are negative. Then the other half is that you have to allow someone else the same right without taking offense. If they happen to be unhappy with us how open are you to that? We get defensive. We will discuss it with them until they understand why I'm right.

Another glitch is that we don't talk to each other. You girls go out on a lunch date and you chat for 3 hours. You laugh and you have a ball. You go home and can't talk 10 minutes with a teenager or a spouse unless it is logistics. During FHE you have a conversation, but in most situations it's a lecture. I will ask you questions and you may answer appropriately. That's all you can say. Everyone is dismissed and you can go your way. That is the picture in most families.

The key is the mother has got to learn how to communicate and then teach her children how to communicate. Then IF your spouse is receptive you may teach him how to communicate.

President Monson...."The ability to communicate is not something we are born with. We have to learn it and earn it." ([*Improvement Era*, Feb. 1969, p. 4.](#))

You have to learn it and then do it enough that those you are trying to communicate with you earn their confidence. You earn their trust so they will open up to you.

Little tiny people as they learn the language are very open. What happens when these little people begin their communication.

When the 4 year old wakes up over and over and over in the night. You are tired and you have a new baby. Your patience level is not good. There is nothing to be afraid of. Go to sleep! Don't talk to me until morning. I have a scratch on my arm. Oh it's nothing.

There are 2 things that happen when we are learning this process. How often whatever you said were you told you were wrong? No you can't be angry. No you aren't hurt. It is ridiculous that you are so sad that Dad & I are going out. Do you see how often we negate feelings. As they grow up they have learned to put barriers around their emotions because it's not safe.

Men typically are fixers. That is what they do. You throw something out to a man a spouse and they fix it.

Example: I say Cory won't do his homework. He says...do this. He give me an answer. Every time I say something he corrects me. I think it would be great to go out to dinner tonight? We can't do that we have this and this to do tonight. To women you just shut down.

Now I have a real problem and question and then when I go to him and ask "How do you think Ruth would have felt when Ruth approached Naomi?" He tells you the story. They start giving you an answer that is not related to the question, but is related to the question. Now I have a really emotional issue in my life. I just don't feel like my prayers are getting to heaven. I want him close. Who am I going to talk to him about? I should talk to my husband. If that was my problem and I did that he was say, "You are so spiritual. I know Heavenly Father loves you." That's not my problem. Do you see? Can you identify some of these in your experience? None of this is wrong. It's all hurtful to relationships.

The problem is the lack of ability to communicate. When you learn then you have to be willing to get into those discussions until you can earn that trust. Communication is a long hard process. It takes a willingness to be hurt. It takes a willingness to not take offense when someone else is learning how to communicate with you.

In the prayer experience...the woman's typical expression would be, "You just don't understand." Does he know what he is doing is wrong? Does he know he just slammed the door on my heart? The truth is you aren't going to change what you have unless you are willing to make a change. You are responsible for the change. I should say, "I probably didn't say it so you could understand." You take responsibility and then you say it again.

I need to teach you what you do.

One of the biggest problems we have is that we assume we understand what the other person is talking about. He assumed he understood what I was saying. He answered to that assumption. That is what we usually do.

☺ Springdale Arkansas SAT test—Name the 4 seasons...salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar. How is dew formed? The sun shines on the leaves and makes them perspire.

There are certain things that have to happen in our home for us to change it.

Ways to improve communication in our home....

1. Create communication:

You have to have cell phones docked. You can't be answering your cell phone during talk time either. You need to get rid of electronics. Sometimes you can dictate when talk time will be. If I have a teenage daughter (14) that haven't communicated well. Sit her down and say, "Let's talk". Do you think she is going to tell you important things? There is no trust. This isn't safe. Sometimes we try to demand talk time and it won't happen.

Element of Talk Time:

1. Create an element of safety.
 - a. You have to slow down so they know that you have 'time' to talk.
 - b. That feeling of openness is created when you are doing something together. If you have a son go shoot hoops and let him help you. You have to create safety times. Make cookies. Have a craft project with your kids. You have to create moments that you are good.
 - c. Having PPI's are good (after they have been going for awhile). They can be pretty rigid to begin with. Until you get a format down when where they don't think they are being interrogated.

- d. ["Good Better Best" Dallin H. Oaks](#) "In choosing how we spend time as a family, we should be careful not to exhaust our available time on things that are merely good and leave little time for that which is better or best. A friend took his young family on a series of summer vacation trips, including visits to memorable historic sites. At the end of the summer he asked his teenage son which of these good summer activities he enjoyed most. The father learned from the reply, and so did those he told of it. "The thing I liked best this summer," the boy replied, "was the night you and I laid on the lawn and looked at the stars and talked." Super family activities may be good for children, but they are not always better than one-on-one time with a loving parent."
- e. They just want to have safe, open, time.
- f. 4 times during the day...
 - i. **Table time**—any meal. Should be a time where you initiate talk time. What elements have to be there? How can you change from what you have to make it different? Can use conversation sticks. Share a CTR moment during the day. A time they chose the right. As it continued they would find things to say.
 - ii. Mother has to enforce them. Elementary children say really 'dumb' things....to a teenager. It has to be a requirement that nothing is dumb. You can't put anyone down. No sarcasm. It is required that you make a comment that seeks more information from that child. The 14 year old boy must ask the 7 year old daughter a question about the friend that wouldn't play with her at recess. This is the best practice you can give your sons practice on being husbands.
 - iii. **Crossroads**—home from school. If you are gone to the store they have moved on. Right at the cross roads. Date nights...right when they get home. EXCEPT—maybe with Dad. Dad needs some space before initiating it.
 - iv. **Car time**—turn off CDs, unplug them from ear buds, unplug from cell phones and talk. Ask them what they know about...? How did you feel about...? They can't get out. If you use the time to take one child to the store with you. If you can get them all to do 'remember whens...' or word games. You have them interact together. Tell a continuous story...one person starts and goes around. Any kind of game or story. Communication becomes productive after

that relationship of trust has been built. Interacting in a happy way creates that relationship of trust.

v. **Bed time**—Talk them into bed instead of tuck them in.

Questions to ask....

- How do you feel about...?
- What is your understanding of...?
- What do you think...? (their opinion)
- What do you believe is the meaning of...?

Class member: How do you balance talk time at bed time between kids?

My feeling is 10 minutes each. Start with the youngest. Every night someone else got to stay up an extra ½ hour. There were rules...no electronics, no TV, we could play games. We could talk. You could bake something. Kids are visual...make a calendar. I don't get it tonight or tomorrow. They are a lot more receptive that just telling them they are going to get their turn. Put it on the calendar so they can see what night is theirs. During that time you may not lecture them about anything they aren't doing right. You have to do some preplanning on what you are going to do with them. You have to figure out the questions. YOU have to make it happen. You can read books together. The 2 of you have to be together. Don't be afraid to interject questions while you are reading.

Class member: My husband and I divide and conquer. The girls talk to Dad about some things and me about other things.

If you have a husband home that is willing that is fabulous. If you go to an unwilling husband you might not have a great experience. To tell them what you want, to invite them to help you if fabulous. The more Dad is involved the better the picture is.

Object is communication...

Question--You have a little boy Steve. He says..."I hate Suzy." He is crying.

Wrong--What do you say? You don't hate Suzy. You are just mad at her.

Class members responses--You sound really upset? Repeat back to them where they say back what you said. "FAST FOOD rule". Make sure they repeat it back to make sure. What's going on? Can we find a common ground? Tell me about what happened? I'm sorry you feel that way? Why?

Our tendency is to correct bad behavior. We hate when our husband 'fixes' it. It shuts us down. We do the same thing to our kids. It is invalidating them.

Does he have the right to be angry? Yes. Is anger a bad feeling? No. Uncontrolled anger is bad. To feel angry is human. We need to teach them what to do with feelings. They have the right to feel.

What is your goal? To help him feel better. To control his anger. Let him express. You want them to feel validated as a person and to learn how to control it. This is where we have a hard time separating child and behavior.

We lump it together and say, "You are a bad person because you are having negative feelings." Instead of "You are a good person having some hard feelings."

Validate--I can see you are really upset. (I am understanding your feeling) Tell me about it? Why are you upset? (You aren't angry).

The goal is for them to figure it out on their own. We usually fix the problem. We need to ask enough questions to get them to answer their questions.

You need to take the wind out of their sails.

At 4 he is either building walls because it's not safe or coming to you because it was safe.

Twelve Commandments of Being A Good Communicator

1. Work to understand what was meant.
 - a. You are going into a conversation assuming you already know what was meant.
 - b. Let me see if I got that right, "I am understanding you are really happy/distraught/upset?" Anytime you clarify it validates the person.
 - c. What would you do if your husband said, "Let me understand you didn't have any teachers in primary today? Wow! What did you do?" Do you see how that changes the whole demeanor. You work to understand.
 - d. You reflect understanding. If you are the one presenting the case and they have it wrong. YOU take responsibility for that (not YOU didn't understand). Restate it and don't take offense.
2. Seek for meaning in more than just their words

- a. body language facial expression. Watch their tone.
- 3. Don't interrupt
 - a. Yellows have a VERY hard time with this one.
 - b. Stephen Covey "If you are having a discussion where you don't agree with each other that before you can state your opinion about why they are wrong you have to restate their opinion according to their satisfaction before you can say your opinion."
- 4. When you are listening in a conversation put aside your own personal views and opinions.
 - a. At the moment you are listening you can listen 5x faster than someone can speak.
 - b. You need to focus on what they are saying right at that moment.
- 5. Control your impatience
- 6. Don't prepare your answer while they are speaking.
 - a. Be in that subject with them for a minute.
- 7. Show interest and alertness
 - a. It's done with body language. You are with them.
- 8. Ask questions to clarify and not entrap the speaker.
- 9. Don't quibble about words.
 - a. If I say...you 'never' take out the garbage.
- 10. Look for areas of agreement before you look for areas of disagreement and build on those first.
- 11. Sum up your understanding to see if you got it right.
 - a. Particularly with teenagers!
- 12. Avoid answering emotionally.
 - a. Be at level zero

10 Keys to Building Relationships of Trust: In order to be effective relationship building is not time efficient. It takes time and focus to build strong relationships.

- 1. Go to all games and activities
- 2. Use language of respect
 - a. No put downs, sarcasm, name calling, even in jest.
 - b. Use please and thank you.
- 3. Listen first to understand (ask three questions) then seek to be understood
- 4. Ask their opinion.
- 5. Discipline with love and respect
 - a. Negotiate up front, hold them accountable. It gives them a feeling of self worth.
- 6. Play with them.
- 7. Validate and affirm faith in them. Say "I love you!"

8. Help them set goals and achieve them.
9. Keep your word
10. Pray for them in specifics and ask Heavenly Father how you can help them.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

Before you can give your response in any given discussion/talk/answer/fix something/opinion you must ask 3 questions for clarification for insight for information.

If a child comes home and says, “I hate Suzy at school!” Then I need to ask 3 questions before I can say “You need to get a new friend. I have never liked her anyway.”

Your spouse tells you something you need to ask 3 questions before you start dumping on him.

The safest way to teach your spouse how to listen to you is to teach them about the 3 question rule and ask them if they would do that to you. Do it light hearted. The next time you start a conversation and you share something enjoy saying....what was your first question? It will help them see and learn how to do it. That will validate a woman and a teenager better than anything you can do.

Story: 1994 Conference Richard P. Lindsay [“Feed My Sheep”](#)

I grew up in rural Salt Lake County when it was an economic necessity to care for a variety of barnyard animals. My favorite animals were sheep—prompted perhaps by the fact that sheep do not require being milked twice a day, seven days a week.

I wanted our own sons to have the blessing of being shepherds to such farm animals. Our older sons were each provided with a ewe to teach them the responsibility of caring for these sheep and the lambs that would hopefully follow.

Our second son, newly turned six years of age, called me excitedly at my office one cold March morning on the phone and said, “Daddy, guess what? Esther [Esther was his mother ewe]—Esther has just had two baby lambs. Please come home and help me take care of them.” I instructed Gordon to watch the lambs carefully and make sure they received the mother’s milk and they would be fine. I

was interrupted by a second phone call later in the morning with the same little voice on the other end saying, “Daddy, these lambs aren’t doing very well. They haven’t been able to get milk from the mother, and they are very cold. Please come home.”

My response likely reflected some of the distress I felt by being distracted from my busy work schedule. I responded, “Gordon, the lambs will be all right. You just watch them, and when Daddy comes home we will make sure they get mother’s milk and everything will be fine.” Again, later in the afternoon I received a third, more urgent call. Now the voice on the other end was pleading. “Daddy, you’ve got to come home now. Those lambs are lying down, and one of them looks very cold.” Despite work pressures, I now felt some real concern and tried to reassure the six-year-old owner of the mother sheep by saying, “Gordon, bring the lambs into the house. Rub them with a gunnysack to make them warm. When Daddy comes home in a little while, we will milk the mother, feed the lambs, and they will be fine.”

Two hours later I drove into the driveway of our home and was met by a boy with tear-stained eyes, carrying a dead lamb in his arms. His grief was overwhelming. Now I tried to make amends by quickly milking the mother sheep and trying to force the milk from a bottle down the throat of the now weak, surviving lamb. At this point, Gordon walked out of the room and came back with a hopeful look in his eyes. He said, “Daddy, I’ve prayed that we will be able to save this lamb, and I feel it will be all right.”

The sad note to this story, brethren, is that within a few minutes the second lamb was dead. Then with a look that I will remember forever, this little six-year-old boy who had lost both of his lambs looked up into his father’s face and with tears

running down his cheeks said, “Daddy, if you had come home when I first called you, we could have saved them both.”

Your children are calling you. They are calling you repeatedly. The question is are you hearing them? If you hear them are you putting them off or are you answering them. Are you hearing their hearts? It’s hard work to get into their hearts. Tread softly you walk on sacred ground.

ADDED PER SISTER TANNER:

Homework for Communication Class:

1. Fill in the blank: “I will strengthen my ability to communicate by.....”
2. Focus on listening to understand. Ask 3 questions.
3. Create time in the family for talking—5 times a day.
4. Teach and use good cell phone manners, teach children to leave cell phones off during church, YM/YW and family home evening, and family talk time. Be wise in the use of “texts”. It is a tool. Check to see how many texts your children are sending a day.
5. Help each child set a goal, make a plan to accomplish it, and follow through with them. This gives them a good opportunity to communicate with you.
6. Focus on better communication with Heavenly Father in your prayers.