**Kids LEARN How to Communicate**

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March 2010

 Kids start learning how to communicate with their world from the moment they are born. They are programmed to vocalize and use their bodies in ways that are communicating their needs. Their cries, squeaks, squeals, screams, and even their giggles tell us what they need, along with the squirming and flailing of their tiny bodies. It is our job as Parents to interpret the meaning of these sounds and gestures, and then to respond effectively in a nurturing and soothing manner. We teach our children about the world around them every time we meet or don't meet their needs; by what we say and do, or don't say or do.

 These same children grow up to be teenagers! You may even have one or more of these adolescent people in your life. These teens have had plenty of time watching us both communicating effectively and not; and now they venture out whole-heartedly to navigate their world; and it all starts at home. Effective families start with effective Parenting; effective Parents use effective communication!

 During the teen years, many parents feel as though the're experiencing technical problems with teen communication; only random bits of conversations are punctuated by their teen's with *"Huh?"*, *"I don't know"*, *"Whatever"*, *"Leave me alone, go away"*, *"You* *don't even know me at all!"*, *"I HATE my life!"*, and the various grunts and the dramatic rolling of the eyes that feel like lighting and thunder to the parent who was merely asking how their day was at school.

 The chances are, if you've got a teen in your life, you know this scenario quite well.

 So now let's take a closer look at how parents communicate with each other. Perhaps you and your spouse don't seem to understand each other anymore, and you're questioning whether you ever did? Your adult conversations are brief and meaningless, maybe only the facts are lazily spouted; conversations that usually take place in passing from car to house, and from room to room, even by texts are limited, if at all. Many parents even find themselves caught up in the manic carpooling to endless kid-focused activities. There may not even be a time when you sit down without the distractions from TV or the internet, etc, to share a meal together and discuss what happened in each family members' day. Is there family time?

 Our children are watching our every move.

 Take a deep cleansing breath.

 Communication problems happen. We unknowingly create patterns of behaviors, and when we don't address the ineffective behaviors, the patterns exist, and become ingrained in our families. There is a solution; a resolution! First, each family member must honestly believe that the interactions within their family ***can*** be improved. The next step is for all family members to ***agree*** to being part of that solution. And here is where the magic exists.

 In my previous article, *Nurturing Communication*, I stated that, *"Communication involves so much more than what we say. Partners must choose to improve how they communicate with each other by honestly sharing how they feel and what they are expecting from the other. Learning to communicate better can bring your relationship to a whole new level and reduce stress and conflict."* We can apply this same idea to communicating within our own families, between spouses and children. It's important to remember that we, as parents, are helping our children, yes...even our teens, to learn how to function in society and it all starts at home. It starts with mutual love and respect. Our children will learn from our actions - both good & bad!

 Behavioral Patterns can be re-created to fit the family's needs. Parents are empowered to systematically, step-by-step, change their family's internal system of how they relate to each other; with gentleness, honesty, and courage to take back their position as Parent. A change in the family's current system of behaviors, or patterns of interacting with each other, involves the commitment of all family members to be strong enough to *Actively Listen*, to reply using *"I" Statements*, show respect to each family member, and receive the same respect back.

 To start this initial step, the parents will need to carve out small windows of uninterrupted "Parent Time" so they can create the framework for the changes they would like to introduce to their family. Then Parents schedule frequent uninterrupted family time to discuss their ideas of changes with the family, and encourage their children to appropriately use active listening and "I" statements in response.

 Our Parents can empower their families to make the changes that will create happy, healthy, respectful children and peaceful nurturing Parents. I believe in the power of each of you. I know your journey is just one step away!