

## **The Power of Communication**

*Definition: Communication is an exchange of understanding. It involves speaking, listening, and most importantly understanding. It is performed through words, writing, visuals and body language.*

Perhaps the most powerful principle of all human interactions is communication, but in communication we must first seek to understand. Too often we listen with intent **not** to understand but to respond. At the root of all relationship problems is the failure to thoroughly understand each other – to see the world through another’s eyes, and also through their mind and heart. Unfortunately many of us are raised to believe that investing time and energy to understand another deeply, without judgment or attacking nor defending may suggest agreement or weakness. This is not so. It is through understanding another that we maximize the purpose of communication.

*At the earliest stages of development the newborn learns to communicate his/her needs through crying and movement. The parent that seeks to understand their baby’s needs is already teaching their child about effective communication and the importance of their relationship. One of the key factors contributing to children **at risk** is when the child communicates and the parent, for whatever reason, either does not regularly respond or mostly responds inappropriately. The feeling of helplessness produces negative emotion and passivity.*

Try these skills when someone is speaking to you:

1. Be silent – give eye contact. Take note of their body language. Make sure your body language says ‘I am listening’ not ‘I’m in a hurry for you to finish’.
2. Use encourages eg ‘mmm;, tell me more,
3. Reflect back what they are saying and what feelings they are showing eg. when you said this..... you looked sad. Is that how you feel?

It is by teaching or modelling good communication, through understanding, that our children will be able to develop close relationships with their family and others beyond the family. They will learn to be social and confident - qualities that will serve our children throughout their life.

*Adapted from ‘Clearing Communication Lines’ (Principle-Centred Leadership) by Stephen R. Covey*