

Inclusion Tools for After School Professionals

brought to you by the San Francisco Special Needs Inclusion/Mental Health Consultation Collaborative
The Special Needs Inclusion Project, Instituto Familiar de la Raza & Edgewood Center for Children and Families

SNIPPET #5: Using Communication to Strengthen Relationships

Communication is essential in obtaining and maintaining relationships. Whether the relationship is personal, professional, with an adult or with a child; communication skills are necessary. Through effective communication skills we are able to successfully relay information.

However, ineffective communication can cause misunderstandings, confusion, and/or relational problems.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is when a message is put into words by the sender- encoding. Those words are then translated into a concept by the receiver- decoding. If the receiver understands the sender's message clearly that is effective communication.

When communicating the message it's important that both the content and the context are understood. The content is the language being used by the sender, what is being said. Context is the way the sender is relaying the message; tone of voice, body language, making appropriate eye contact, speaking clearly and hand gestures.

INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

There are many reasons why a message is misunderstood. Some may be due to the time, place, language, culture, body language, clarity, or other factors. When a message is not understood

both the sender and receiver of the message become frustrated and uninterested.

TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH ADULTS

Time - Find a time when both people can talk uninterrupted without rushing off or feeling pressured or stressed.

Mood - ask if they are up to talking. "Is now a good time?"

Place - A quiet space is helpful. The receiver of the message may be over stimulated by the environment making it difficult to concentrate on the sender's message.

Language - use clear and concise language. If there are many details the point may be lost. Speak clearly and slowly to be understood.

Proximity & Body Language - Do not stand too close but stand in hearing distance of the person. Eye contact shows that there is interest in the other person and engagement is occurring.

Receptive - ask if there are any questions. See if anything needs to be restated. Modeling receptiveness can strengthen communication skills for both sender and receiver.

TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

Communicating with children is similar to

communicating with adults. Children need to be heard, validated, and understood as well. The above communication tools work with children along with other tools as:

Coming down to eye level- speaking to children at their eye level models respect as well as aids in engaging the child in communication.

Language - use age appropriate language.

Be Familiar - address the child by their name.

Validate - support the youth and listen to what they have to say. Be sincere in your responses.

Model - learning is acquired through experience and examples. Model effective communication skills.

We communicate on a daily basis at home, at work, with friends, with family, and even with strangers. Communication is a daily occurrence of our lives. The degree of the effectiveness depends on our style of communication. Practicing effective communication will help strengthen relationships; both parties will feel heard and validated. Effective communication is a tool that needs to be practiced in order to be strengthened.

*by Tenisha Gonzalez, MFTI
Mental Health Consultant
Instituto Familiar de La Raza, Inc.*



*The Special Needs Inclusion/Mental Health Collaborative is funded by
the San Francisco Department of Children Youth and Their Families
Contact Dee Hayden at 415-282-7494 for more information*