



Monthly Parenting Tip from the ACFC

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Communication: The Road to Cooperation

Teaching a child how to solve problems cooperatively is in everyone's interest: the child, the family, the school, and even the community. How we teach cooperation is a matter of how and what we communicate. It involves both attitude and skill. Active parents develop an attitude that says to the child, "You have the right to decide how to solve this problem. I can help, but you are the key to solving this and other problems you will encounter throughout your life. I believe you have what it takes to solve problems. You have good sense and a perspective that is truly your own. You will make some mistakes along the way, maybe some big ones. But you will recover from those mistakes, learn from them, and grow stronger in the process. Now, let's solve the problem."

Developing the communication skills to help others solve problems effectively will do more for your children than solving problems for them. These same communication skills will continue to help them throughout their lives, making them better students, friends, workers, colleagues, and spouses. Why? Because communication skills help build cooperation skills.

Developing an attitude of support is essential to building cooperation, because communication involves much more than just what you say. In fact, your message is carried on three separate channels:

- Your words
- Your tone of voice
- Your body language including hand gestures, how close you stand and facial expressions.

When it comes to communicating basic information like driving directions or a shopping list, your words carry most of the message. However, with an emotionally charged message like a problem, research has shown that more of the message is carried by body language, followed by tone of voice, and lastly, the words themselves. In other words, how you say something is often even more important than what you say.

When all three channels of communication carry the same message, the communication is very clear and powerful. However, when we say one thing with our words and something else with our tone and/or body language, we send a *mixed message*. This not only dilutes the strength of the message, but often sabotages the spirit of cooperation you are trying to build. This is why developing a positive attitude is so important. If your attitude is negative, you may be able to hide it with the words you choose, but your tone of voice and body language will almost always give you away. The next time you have a discussion with your child try to focus on not just what you say, but also your posture, how you hold your hands and the tone of your voice.

To learn more about how you can become an "active" parent, go to vimeopro.com/activeparenting/acfc and enter Access Code: ACFC150630 (case-sensitive) when prompted. You'll find a library of informative videos for parents of children of all ages.



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