

Communication Checks: A Self-Quiz

Parents and children use lots of different strategies to communicate with one another. Which of the following communication strategies do you find yourself and your adolescent using with each other. Please indicate how often both you and your adolescent (child) use each specific strategy (1= little; 2 = a lot).

| Communication Method Do you....: | Parent | Child |
|--|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Use the words “always” and “never” | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 2. Yell, shout, raise your voice | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 3. Tease (make fun of the other person) or mock the other person | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 4. Use big words | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 5. Repeat your opinion over and over | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 6. Threaten (to use punishment) | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 7. Call the other person names | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 8. Interrupt | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 9. State the other person’s opinion | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 10. Give short, unhelpful responses like “Uh huh” “I don’t know” | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 11. Asking a question in a way that makes it sound like the other person has done something wrong | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 12. Make suggestions | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 13. Make demands (commands, requests which require action) | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 14. Argue over small points | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 15. Talk very little, remain silent, refuse to talk | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 16. Talk a lot | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 17. Talking as though the other person didn’t say anything | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 18. Joke | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 19. Praise, compliment | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 20. Ask what the other person would like | 1 2 | 1 2 |

| Communication Strategy Do you....: | Parent | Child |
|---|---------------|--------------|
| 21. Make accusations or blame others | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 22. Use put-downs or criticisms | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 23. Exaggerate how bad things are | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 24. Lecture, preach, or give long sermons | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 25. Talk in a sarcastic tone of voice | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 26. Avoid using eye contact | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 27. Fidget, move restlessly, or gesture when being spoken to | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 28. Think you can read the others' mind or state someone's opinion | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 29. Get off topic | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 30. Make demands or commands, or order others around | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 31. Dwell on the past, tell "war" stories | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 32. Monopolize the conversation | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 33. Threaten or try to manipulate | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 34. Call someone names, swear | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 35. Argue a lot | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 36. Ignore the other person | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 37. Sit with your back to the person | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 38. Use inappropriate hand gestures, threats | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 39. Other: | 1 2 | 1 2 |
| 40. Other: | 1 2 | 1 2 |

Adapted from: Robin, A. L., & Foster, S. L. (1989). Negotiating Parent-Adolescent Conflict: A Behavioral-Family Systems Approach. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Note. This is meant to help facilitate discussion during sessions. It is not an assessment device.

Communication Obstacles and Alternatives (Skills)

| <i>Obstacle</i> | <i>Skill/Alternative</i> |
|--|---|
| Talking through a third person | Talking directly to another person |
| Accusing, blaming, defensive statements | Making I statements (I feel ____ when ____ happens) |
| Putting down, zapping, shaming | Accepting responsibility, I-statements |
| Interrupting | Listening, raising hand or gesturing when wanting to talk, encouraging speakers to use brief statements |
| Overgeneralizing, catastrophizing, making rigid statements (“never listens”) | Qualifying, making tentative statements, accurate quantitative statements |
| Lecturing, preaching, moralizing | Making brief, explicit problem statements (I would like_____) |
| Talking in a sarcastic tone of voice | Talking in a neutral tone of voice |
| Failing to make eye contact | Looking at the person with whom you are talking |
| Fidgeting, moving restlessly, or gesturing when being spoken to | Sitting in a relaxed fashion, excusing self for being restless |
| Mind reading, stating the other’s opinion | Reflecting, paraphrasing, validating |
| Getting off topic | Catching self and returning to the problem as defined |
| Demanding, commanding, ordering | Suggesting alternative solutions |
| Dwelling on the past, war stories | Sticking to the present and future |
| Monopolizing the conversation, repetition | Taking turns making brief statements |
| Using big words, intellectualizing | Speaking in simple, clear language |
| Threatening or trying to manipulate | Suggesting alternative solutions |
| Teasing, humoring, discounting | Reflecting, validating |
| Calling people names, swearing | Using appropriate words to express criticism |
| Remaining silent, ignoring, not responding | Reflecting, validating |
| Yelling, talking in loud voice | Using an indoor or soft voice |
| Arguing over minor matters | Picking your battles |

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