



JULY/AUGUST, 2014

July/August 2014

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HEALTHY COMMUNICATION WITHIN A MARRIAGE

You are blissfully in love and thrilled to be married and you love all of your partner's quirky ways. Then it comes the day when you realize his or her quirky ways are annoying and frustrating. You encounter your first argument, which can lead you down a slippery slope of desperation. When you enter down that road of desperation you go into what I refer to as me mode. At this point you focus only on your thoughts, feelings, and view issues from only your perspective, which leads you to lose focus on your marriage. When you enter into a marriage you lose the concept of me and develop the concept of us. Being married is not about me, but about we, which is two people working together to build a long-lasting healthy relationship. In marriage, communication is the glue that holds the relationship together. If the communication breaks down, the relationship will dissolve. If neither spouse is communicating with the other then the marriage does not seem satisfying. Effective communication involves having respect for the other person and putting forth authentic effort.

The first component to having effective communication is respecting your spouse. When respecting your partner it is important not to reject his or her perceptions, especially when they differ from your views. This rejection may even be unconscious. You may find yourself ready to dispute the things your spouse has to say, to challenge them, or even hear them as threats. Obviously, this type of attitude interferes with two-way communication. The first step is to improve the communication dialogue by respecting your partner. Respect allows you to accept another person's point of view wholeheartedly. Consider and value your spouse's perspectives or suggestions by letting your partner know that you respect and value his or her view point.

The second component to having effective communication is putting forth authentic effort. Place yourself and your spouse completely in the communication process, meaning being mentally and physically present in the conversation. If one partner does all the talking, creates all the ideas and has most or all of the influences, this style of communication is unhealthy for the relationship. This style of communication labels one spouse as dominant and the other as inferior. In order to have good communication it involves both spouses equally communicating with each other.

To work towards this full involvement you should:

- Take full responsibility for your role in the conversation.
- Put forth active effort in communication.
- Make a commitment to seeing the process through.
- Express your thoughts and feelings fully and encourage your partner to do the same.

Resolve misinterpretations by asking questions and seeking understanding rather than by getting angry. By implementing authentic effort to your communication, you are making a statement that you are committed to your relationship. It will demonstrate that the relationship is important to you and that you are willing to involve yourself fully in this act of communication. Only through good, true communication can you realize the blissfulness of marriage. Good communication makes a healthy marriage possible and certainly makes it better.

HEALTHY COMMUNICATION WITHIN A MARRIAGE

Guidelines for Fighting Fair:

Embrace conflict. There is no need to fear it. Conflict is normal, even healthy. Differences between you mean that there are things you can learn from each other. Often conflict shows us where we can or need to grow.

Go after the issue, not each other. Friendly fighting sticks with the issue. Neither party resorts to name calling or character assassination. It's enough to deal with the problem without adding the new problem of hurting each other's feelings.

Listen respectfully. When people feel strongly about something, it's only fair to hear them out. Respectful listening means acknowledging their feelings, either verbally or through focused attention. It means never telling someone that he or she "shouldn't" feel that way. It means saving your point of view until after you've let the other person know you understand that they feel intensely about the subject, even if you don't quite get it.

Talk softly. The louder someone yells, the less likely they are to be heard. Even if your partner yells, there's no need to yell back. Taking the volume down makes it possible for people to start focusing on the issues instead of reacting to the noise

Get curious, not defensive. Defending yourself, whether by passionately protesting your innocence or rightness or by turning the tables and attacking, escalates the fight. Instead of upping the ante, ask for more information, details, and examples. There is usually some basis for the other person's complaint. When you meet a complaint with curiosity, you make room for understanding.

Ask for specifics. Global statements that include the words "always" and "never" gets you nowhere and isn't true. When your partner has complaints, ask for specific examples so you can understand exactly what he or she is talking about. When you have complaints, do your best to give your partner examples to work with.

Find points of agreement. There almost always are parts of a conflict that can be points of agreement. Finding common ground, even if it's agreeing that there is a problem, is an important start to finding a common solution.

Look for options. Fighting ends when cooperation begins. Asking politely for suggestions or alternatives invites partnership. Offering alternatives of your own shows that you also are willing to try something new.

Make concessions. Small concessions can turn the situation around. If you give a little, it makes room for the other person to make concessions too. Small concessions lead to larger compromises. Compromise doesn't have to mean that you're meeting each other exactly 50-50. Sometimes it's a 60-40 or even 80-20 agreement. This isn't about scorekeeping. It's about finding a solution that is workable for both of you. Remember it's not about the me, but the we.

Make peace. Never go to sleep angry, which means that sometimes you may be up very late until you come up with a compromise. On occasion you and your spouse may decide that the issues are not really important enough to lose sleep over.

Bellows, A. (2007). Good Communication in Marriage Starts with Respect. Psych Central. Retrieved on July 20, 2014, from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/good-communication-in-marriage-starts-with-respect/0001080>

Hartwell-Walker, M. (2008). 10 Rules for Friendly Fighting for Couples. Psych Central. Retrieved on July 20, 2014, from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/10-rules-for-friendly-fighting-for-couples/0001342>

By: Stephanie Turner

BACK TO SCHOOL TRANSITION TIPS

Starting a new school year off right can influence children's attitude, confidence, and performance both socially and academically. The transition from July to August can be difficult for both children and parents. Even children who are eager to return to class must adjust to the greater levels of activity, structure, and, for some, pressures associated with school/peer life. The degree of adjustment depends on the child, but parents can help their children (and the rest of the family) manage the increased pace of life by planning ahead, being realistic, and maintaining a positive attitude. Here are a few suggestions to help ease the transition and promote a successful school experience.

Good physical and mental health. Be sure your child is in good physical and mental health. Before the school year starts, schedule doctor and dental appointments for your child. Discuss any concerns you have over your child's emotional or psychological development with your pediatrician. Your doctor can help determine if your concerns are normal, age-appropriate issues or require further assessment. Your child will benefit if you can identify and begin addressing a potential issue before school starts. Schools appreciate the efforts of parents to remedy problems as soon as they are recognized.

Plan Ahead. Try to get uniforms, supplies and other school essentials as early as possible. Fill the backpacks a week or two before school starts. Older children can help do this, but make sure they use a checklist that you can review.

Re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines. Plan to re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines (especially breakfast) at least 1 week before school starts. Prepare your child for this change by talking with your child about the benefits of school routines in terms of not becoming over tired or overwhelmed by school work and activities. Include pre-bedtime reading and household chores if these were suspended during the summer. Have school-age children set their own alarm clocks to get up in the morning. Praise them for prompt response to morning schedules and bus pickups.

Designate and clear a place to do homework. Older children should have the option of studying in their room or a quiet area of the house. Younger children usually need an area set aside in the family room or kitchen to facilitate adult monitoring, supervision, and encouragement.

Be prepared. Make sure your child has plenty of time to get up, eat breakfast, and get to school on time. For very young children taking the bus, pin to their shirt or backpack an index card with pertinent information, including their teacher's name and bus number, as well as your daytime contact information.

Familiarize yourself with the other school professionals. Make an effort to find out who it is in the school or district that can be a resource for you and your child. Learn their roles and how best to access their help if you need them. This can include the principal and front office personnel; school psychologist, counselor, and social worker; the reading specialist, speech therapist, and school nurse; and the after-school activities coordinator.

Clark, L. (1996). *SOS: Help for parents* (2nd ed.). Berkley, CA: Parents' Press. ISBN: 0935111204.

Rimm, S. (1996). *Dr. Sylvia Rimm's smart parenting: How to raise a happy, achieving child*. New York: Crown. ASIN: 0517700638.

TRAINING AND OUTREACH

Louisiana Association of Substance Abuse Counselors and Trainers (LASACT) 2014 Statewide Conference

Laurice Harrison, Daryl Hebert, Courtney LeBlanc, Ryan Schutte, and Stephanie Turner attended the 37th annual LASACT Conference in New Orleans, LA on August 3rd—6th. The participants benefited from outstanding speakers and multiple tracks including co-occurring disorders, prevention, addiction treatment, gambling ethics, criminal justice and supervision.

Donaldsonville Teen Summit Part I

On Thursday, July 24th, ACC was on hand at the Donaldsonville Teen Summit at the Leman Center. ACC set up a table to provide information on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counseling and to inform the public of the services we provide to the citizens of Ascension Parish.

Back to School in Style

Ascension Counseling Center participated in the 6th annual “Back to School in Style” event on August 10th at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center. The event was sponsored by Anointed Hands Salon & More. Local stylists and barbers and non-profit organizations were on hand to provide time and resources along with free beauty, grooming and personal hygiene products and tips for children ages 5-15. ACC was able to educate children and parents on the services we provide and also assist in character building and positive self esteem.

Certified Medicaid Application Center at Ascension Counseling Center

Ascension Counseling Center is a certified Medicaid application center. We process applications free of charge at 1112 S.E. Ascension Complex Blvd. in Gonzales (next to the health unit) and at 419 Memorial Blvd. in Donaldsonville (next to Prevost Hospital). Call 225-450-1169 to speak to the Medicaid representative or to schedule an appointment. To apply, you will need social security numbers (or document numbers for any legal immigrants who need insurance). Employer and income information for everyone in your family (for example paystubs and W-2 forms), policy numbers for any current health insurance and information about any job-related health insurance.

New Substance Abuse Groups and Times

Ascension Counseling Center is now offering additional Adult Substance Abuse groups. We have added groups on Monday– Thursday from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM in addition to our night groups. To schedule an appointment please contact Sarah Cuti, Intake Coordinator at 225.450.1158.

www.AscensionParish.Net/MH

MICROSOFT

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HELPING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES CHANGE BEHAVIORS, CHANGE LIVES.

MONTHLY EVENTS

Mondays:

- *Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group*, 10am-12 pm & 6pm - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- *Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group*, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.

Tuesdays:

- *Women's Empowerment Group*, 10 - 11:30 am, Gonzales.
- *Nurturing Parenting, adult & children groups*: 5 - 7:30 pm, Gonzales.
- *Anger Management Class*, 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.
- *Stop Smoking Group*, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales
- *Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group*, 10am-12 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.

Wednesdays:

- *Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group*: 1 pm, Donaldsonville.
- *Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group*, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville.
- *Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group*: 10am-12 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- *Living Strong Cancer Survivors group*, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville. 2nd Wed of each month.
- *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, 10:30 am - noon, lunch provided, Donaldsonville, 3rd Wed of each month

Thursdays:

- *Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group*: 10am-12 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- *Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group*, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.
- *Anxiety Reduction group*: 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.

Ascension Counseling Center provides comprehensive therapeutic services to individuals and families in an effort to foster healthy coping skills that will improve their quality of life.

HOURS

Gonzales:

Business Hours

Mon - Thur: 8 am - 5:30 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Counseling Hours

Mon - Thur: 7 am - 8 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Psychiatrist Hours

Monday and Tuesday: 8 am - 6 pm

Donaldsonville:

Business Hours

Wednesday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm



At Ascension Counseling Center you are at the center of your own care. We aim to treat you the way you want to be treated, with dignity and respect. If you are not receiving the services you want in the way that you want them, please speak to your counselor or ask to speak with Lisa Weber-Curry, Clinical manager (225-450-1172) or Suzanne Hamilton, Director (225-450-1160).