



EFFECTIVE GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Listening and speaking are important in *family communication* and the harmony that will follow from this communication. To be a good listener one must show interest in what the other person is saying to them and also be able to get their ideas across so that the other person will understand them. Here are some *guidelines* that will help you family to communicate better.

1. Draw a mental picture of what the other person is saying.

Ask questions to help you complete the picture in your mind. This will let the other person know that you are taking an interest in his or her topic.

2. Learn something new from the speaker.

Take the role of the student, so that your adolescent becomes the teacher.

3. Stay focused on the other person.

Do not use this time to interrupt with one of your own stories.

4. Be an active listener.

An active listener summarizes the speaker's statements to check for understanding. Ask questions to keep the conversation moving. By asking for more details, you will help to stay focused on the topic.

5. Match the speaker's emotional state, unless it is hostile.

You will help the speaker feel accepted if you match his or her mood. This also shows empathy, or reassurance that you understand and can identify with the speaker.

6. Withhold advice unless you are asked to give it.

Hear the other person out. Do not interrupt or add your opinions until the speaker has finished. Your job is to listen with understanding, not make judgment calls.

7. Put yourself in the other person's shoes.

Try to understand your adolescent's perspective. This shows that you respect his or her point of view, even though you may not agree with it.

8. Think before you speak.

You may want to count to ten before you respond. This will create an opportunity for you to compose yourself and avoid a heated discussion.

9. Encourage the other person.

Even when discussing sensitive or emotionally charged topics, let your adolescent know that you still care about him or her. Think of something you like about him or her.

**Mr. S Thiagaraja
Secretary, PSG
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