

**Back to School:
Preschool Through Grade School**

Presented By:
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Objectives

- Understand developmental milestones of this age group
- Discover new ways of talking and listening to children
- Develop creative communication strategies with your child
- Learn the role of parents in communicating with their child's school and teachers

Elementary Age

- Help them put feelings into words/Identify feelings
- Help keep them focused on the goal – they get easily distracted
- Help them get into the habit of thinking of a few different options/ideas before settling on one.
- Children at this age are learning how to make and keep friends, how to share, and how to react when they don't get their way

Ages and Stages - Erikson

- **Infant**
Trust vs Mistrust
Needs maximum comfort with minimal uncertainty to trust himself/herself, others, and the environment
- **Toddler**
Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt
Works to master physical environment while maintaining self-esteem
- **Preschooler**
Initiative vs Guilt
Begins to initiate, not imitate, activities; develops conscience and sexual identity
- **School-Age Child**
Industry vs Inferiority
Tries to develop a sense of self-worth by refining skills

7 Essential Needs of Children

- To be loved, valued and encouraged.
- To have their physical requirements met.
- To feel safe and secure.
- To have structure, consistency, and predictability.
- To be children.
- To have at least one adult “there” for them.
- To have parent(s) be strong role model(s).

Communication Strategies

BASIC RULES

- Don't interrupt
- Don't become hostile or excited if the other person expresses viewpoints different than your own
- Tune out distractions
- Paraphrase
- Ask questions
- Show interest in what the other person is saying

Communication Strategies

- **Conversation Extenders** – Because children may only give one or two word explanations, use their own words to elicit more information.

Example:

Child says, "I'm mad at Sarah"

Parent says, "What about Sarah makes you mad?"

Communication Strategies

- **Describing** – To get children to take action

Example –

If a child doesn't hang up their clothes:

"I noticed that your clothes are on the floor where you left them last night" rather than,

"You need to hang up your clothes."

(They've heard you say this a million times already)

Communication Strategies

The Columbo Technique – named after the television detective Columbo!

He was non-threatening and people didn't get defensive. Ask questions, communicating confusion rather than irritation. He would scratch his head and attempt to understand what the other person was saying. "That's strange, you mean he just hit you for no reason?" "I'm confused. The report card was left in your locker and you forgot it?"

The truth comes out when people feel safe!

Communication Strategies

- **Humor** – Take into consideration that children are sensitive and don't laugh AT them (the person). However, you may find humor in an action, situation, or mistake. This is a good way to bring out creativity and not let certain situations escalate into bad feelings.

Above all, laugh at yourself and model this for children!

Communication Strategies

- **"I" messages** –
 - State your feeling
 - State the undesirable behavior
 - State the consequence of this behavior

Example: "I feel stressed out when you don't clear the table because it I have to spend extra time talking to you about it and it causes us to have less time to do the fun things we want to do"

Communication Strategies

Asking questions:

- **Open Ended Questions** – to encourage children to talk to parents.
- **Multiple Choice Questions** – better for young children
- **True/False Questions**

Communication Strategies

- **Reflections** – Communicate to the child “I am listening” or “I understand”.

Focus on the child/Remove distractions
Label the emotion the child might be going through. “You sound excited about...”
Clarify by paraphrasing
Don't repeat their exact words

Communication Strategies

- **“Seek first to understand, before being understood”**

Don't present your ideas/opinion/observations until after you have listened.

You might learn that your kids ideas aren't too far from your own – and you would hate to make a wrong assumption!

Communication Strategies

- With older children, **talk about what other children are doing** so that they won't feel like you are attacking them.
- **Use books, stories, movies, TV to help introduce difficult subjects.**

This takes the focus off your child and he/she may talk more openly and honestly.

Communication Strategies

● **Use Written Words**

- Leave notes
- Leave articles writing "This might be something you are interested in..."
- Write letters of encouragement

This is a way to communicate without being so intrusive. It gives both parties time to think without requiring a response.

If you respond appropriately, empathically, with an open mind and heart, you will build trust with your child. This will encourage them to share their thoughts, dreams, feelings, and ideas.

Monitor Your Reactions:

Know that children may say things you don't want to hear...

- Don't dismiss what they say
 - "That isn't true!"
- Acknowledge what they said – that doesn't mean "agree" with what they said; let them know you heard what they said.

Your Reactions

- Don't deny what they say
 - *"You don't really feel that way"*
- Again, listen and acknowledge; ask questions to clarify their opinions or ideas

Your Reactions

- Don't criticize what they say
 - *"You never understand the rules!"*
- Use guidance – state the problem and possible solution

Your Reactions

- Don't humiliate them for what they said
 - *"You are immature and lazy!"*
- Again, empathize and acknowledge them and let them know that you heard what they said

Your Reactions

- Don't get angry
 - *You make me so mad...!*
 - (Using expletives or physical anger)
- Be calm and express how the behavior makes you feel – use "I" statements; "I feel _____, when you _____"

At all times be aware of your and your child's:

- Body Posture
- Eye Contact
- Speech (the words)
- Tone of Voice

Guidelines for Talking with Children

- Start Early
- Initiate Conversations With Your Child
- Even about Sex and Relationships
- Create an Open Environment
- Communicate your values
- Listen to Your Child
- Try to be Honest
- Be Patient
- Use Everyday Opportunities to Talk
- Talk About it Again. And Again.

What to Do When...

- You are shocked by a question
- You don't know the answer
- You need time to compose an answer

Work on Being a Good Role Model

- You cannot NOT model
- Listen well and talk respectfully.
- What would you most like people to notice about you?

Demonstrate Love, Respect, and Appreciation

- Create an environment of kindness and courtesy
- Encourage apologizing, forgiveness, and "agreeing to disagree"
- Demonstrate love, respect, and appreciation so your child will know that you value him/her.
- Give hugs often; spend one-on-one time with him/her.

Have Reasonable Expectations for Your Child's Behavior

- Be familiar with developmental stages
- Match chores to developmental abilities
- Remember that unreasonable expectations can turn into inappropriate behavior.

Set Limits – Discipline to Teach, Not to Punish

- Set limits; discipline to teach – not to punish.
- Make expectations and guidelines clear.
- Engage your child in setting a few basic rules.
- Avoid overindulging your child with material possessions and giving in to unreasonable demands.
- Help your child understand the consequences of his/her behavior.
- Don't discipline with anger.

Teach Life Skills

- Be a positive role model.
- Use everyday moments for helping your child learn about life.
- Let child do what he can by himself; offer support, training, and encouragement.
- Engage your child in problem solving and decision making.

Organize and Provide Structure

- Have a plan but be flexible and creative
- Create a family vision

“For the first twenty-five years of my life I wanted freedom. For the next 25 years of my life I wanted order. For the next 25 years of my life I realized that order IS freedom.”

- Winston Churchill

Know Key Contacts

- School telephone number and school secretary name
- PTA president name, telephone number and email address
- School newsletter frequency
- Principal email address
- School Web site URL
- Teacher email addresses and voice mail telephone numbers, if available

Communication Strategies

- Meet the teacher
- Schedule a meeting with the teacher early in the year
- Go to parent teacher conferences
- Find the Right Time to Talk to the Teacher
- Write Short Notes and Follow Up
- Follow E-mail Etiquette
- Be Positive and Courteous
- Accept Differences
- Talk to Other School Personnel if Needed
- Be a Partner with the Teacher to Support Your Child's Learning
- Ask What You Can Do to Help
- Keep the Lines of Communication Open All Year

Play and Have Fun!

- Take time for being silly, relaxing, and having a good time.
- Let your child know that being with him/her is a source of pleasure for you.
- Build memories through family rituals.

Parenting assessment

The following questions will be helpful in assessing your parenting skills. Please circle the appropriate number on the scale that best describes you or your interactions with your child(ren).

Key: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = about half the time; 4 = usually; 5 = always

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I respect my children as people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I clearly define limits and expectations of acceptable behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am consistent in my actions and words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have the confidence needed to clearly and firmly communicate my needs and wants to my children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I openly invite my children to participate in the rule-making process. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I look for occasions to "catch my children being good." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I find time daily to have a friendly talk with my children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I listen to my children in a non-judgmental and understanding manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I recognize that my children's feelings are important and need attention. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I encourage my children to be individuals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I recognize the need to be involved with my children and share activities with them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I teach my children the value of working for what they want. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I discuss drugs, sex, AIDS, and other "hot" topics with my children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel my expectations are realistic for my children's ages and abilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I try to be a good role model for my children and "practice what I preach." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I enjoy my children and show them I think they're special. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

This self-assessment is an ideal model. Don't worry if you don't feel that you measure up all the time. Even the best of parents can fall short from time to time. This seminar will help you sharpen your understanding and skills and give you tips on how to improve your parenting approach.

TAKE A MOMENT AND HONESTLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING...

I wanted children because...

As my child grows up, I hope that he/she will be...

Strategies that I can use to encourage this outcome are:

Ages and stages of child development

The following are only guidelines:

Expect your toddler to...

- Be self-centered; not understand other people's feelings
- Become increasingly independent
- Be aware of self as separate from others
- Explore environment and test you
- Imitate behaviors of others
- Enjoy being with other children, but have a hard time sharing
- Acquire more control over body and learn self-help skills: feeding, dressing, washing, and using toilet
- Develop language and comprehension skills, but still feel frustrated when trying to express self
- Have mood swings and much negativity
- Have drop in appetite and be fussy about food
- Have little internal self-control
- Have short attention span; be easily distracted.

Expect your preschooler to...

- Need lots of physical activity
- Gain more control over his body and become more adept at self-help skills: toileting, dressing, eating
- Establish self as separate from parents; become more independent
- Play *with*, rather than *beside*, other children
- Show empathy and want to please
- Be interested in words, ask questions, experiment with profanity, enjoy being silly

- Exaggerate, boast, tell stories, have imaginary friends, engage in fantasy play, have some difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality
- Have fears and anxieties
- Begin to understand right from wrong and relationship between behavior and consequences
- Have awareness of sexuality
- Fall in love with mother (boys) or father (girls)
- Be bossy; order people around

Expect your young school-ager to...

- Be curious and eager to learn
- Understand the differences between right and wrong, fantasy and reality
- Be more interested in real tasks with concrete goals
- Begin to develop a conscience, sense of morality, and sense of justice
- Test the limits of physical abilities, sometimes recklessly
- Need to make choices and decisions within limits
- Understand relationship between behavior and consequences
- Feel attached to parents but want more independence
- Be influenced by peer group
- Understand other people's feelings

Expect your teen to...

- Cope with physical, emotional, and intellectual changes
- Search for their own identity and separating from their parents
- Be critical of their parents
- Be moody and self-centered
- Be unpredictable and interested in trying out new behaviors
- Be strongly influenced by peer group values and opinions

Psychoanalyst **Erik Erikson** describes the physical, emotional and psychological stages of development and relates specific issues, or developmental work or *tasks*, to each stage. For example, if an infant's physical and emotional needs are met sufficiently, the infant completes his/her task -- developing the ability to trust others. However, a person who is stymied in an attempt at task mastery may go on to the next state but carries with him or her the remnants of the unfinished task. For instance, if a toddler is not allowed to learn by doing, the toddler develops a sense of doubt in his or her abilities, which may complicate later attempts at independence. Similarly, a preschooler who is made to feel that the activities he or she initiates are bad may develop a sense of guilt that inhibits the person later in life.

Infant

Trust vs Mistrust

Needs maximum comfort with minimal uncertainty to trust himself/herself, others, and the environment

Toddler

Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt

Works to master physical environment while maintaining self-esteem

Preschooler

Initiative vs Guilt

Begins to initiate, not imitate, activities; develops conscience and sexual identity

School-Age Child

Industry vs Inferiority

Tries to develop a sense of self-worth by refining skills

Adolescent

Identity vs Role Confusion

Tries integrating many roles (child, sibling, student, athlete, worker) into a self-image under role model and peer pressure

Young Adult

Intimacy vs Isolation

Learns to make personal commitment to another as spouse, parent or partner

Middle-Age Adult

Generativity vs Stagnation

Seeks satisfaction through productivity in career, family, and civic interests

Older Adult

Integrity vs Despair

Reviews life accomplishments, deals with loss and preparation for death

Key Contacts

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This seminar was presented by
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Sue Cohen has over thirty years of experience in the fields of child development and parent education. She has been a teacher, researcher and administrator.

Currently, she is a trainer with LifeWork Strategies and presents seminars on issues across the parenting spectrum, including balance between work and family, stress management and family issues and relationships. She also consults and mentors early childhood programs and coaches parents on improving their strategies for creating happier families.

Sue is a proud mother of three grown children and grandmother to two fabulous grandchildren!

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