

Ep #93 Improving communication and increasing comprehension: Part 1

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This is episode 93 on Effective Communication, part one.

We welcome you to the ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siope Kinikini.

Hello, my friends. How are you? I hope you're doing great. I'm doing great. Just wanted to give a shout out to you. Thank you for joining me today, whether or not you are out and about running errands. If you're at home at this time. If you're at work. Those who are exercising right now. Whatever it may be, thank you for joining me today. I just have to give gratitude to that.

Today, I wanted to talk to you about a very essential skill. One that most people take for granted, and they think that they do, but in reality, they don't do. [And that is the skill of Effective Communication.](#)

This is a part one of a two-part series because it's important for parents to really understand the point of Effective Communication. And so, during this podcast, I wanted to cover three very specific things. The purpose of communication and especially Effective Communication. The limitations that we have to overcome. Things that we should be looking for inwardly as parents, as we deal with our children when we're communicating with them. And the third thing is how we should approach Effective Communication. What is the approach we need to take when we are communicating with our child?

So, we're going to cover those three things during this discussion, and I'm speaking specifically to parents who feel like you are having a hard time communicating with your child. I need you to take a step back and do some self-evaluation on how you're doing it and what you're doing. And I'm also going to be covering the steps to Effective Communication during this podcast because the steps to Effective Communication from the Teaching-Family Model teach you exactly the most effective way to get what you want out of the communication that you were having with your child.

Now, there are endless books that exist out there in the world about communicating. These are the things that you need to do with communication and how you should communicate, but I want to point out as the first point is the purpose of communication. The purpose of communication for a parent and a child, or for just people in general is comprehension. We communicate in

order to be comprehended. We want to be understood, and our children want to be understood when they communicate with us.

Now, comprehension is not agreement. We're not 100% need to agree with everything somebody else says. [However, what comprehension allows us to do is in true comprehension, we're allowed to step into the world of another person and understand it, understand where they're coming from and understand how they think their motivations, things that bring them to the point of their point of view. And in turn, comprehension from the other person allows them to move into our space and to understand better why we're doing things, our motivations, and the way that we construct our world.](#)

So, this ability to comprehend each other, allows a lot of people to gain empathy towards each other, to simple as that. Gaining more empathy and more understanding actually helps everyone work together a lot better. I needed to point that out to you as a parent. Your goal in your communication with your child is to reach comprehension. This level of understanding where your child is at and being able to move around in that space. You're moving around in their space. So you can help bring about the change that needs to happen as you guide them along the paths of becoming adults, right?

And in reality, you, as a parent, are going to have far more skill at doing this than your child will. Your child is still learning. And in fact, a lot of what they've constructed in their world and in their mind is still being formulated. It's still being structured. So your ability to be able to Effectively Communicate with them will allow you to enter into that space and really work with your child on their terms. Right? So, learning how to do that when your child is young is very important.

And even when they're teenagers and as your child begins to make sense of the world and they start to have their own opinions, then they can move into your space and they can understand better the way that you behave and the way that you act.

Let me give you an example of this. When I was a young child, my parents set rules for me that I didn't understand. And yet, my parents were very understanding about my development and where I was and what I was experiencing. And so they were able to come in and work with me in that space, the world that I lived in, in order to communicate with me and really give comprehension. I felt like they were with me when we had disagreements about some of the rules that they put in place.

One of those was curfew. My parents had a very strict curfew. It was earlier than my friends, and I didn't understand why my friends could stay out late and why I had to come home early every night. And so my parents, they had their own rules, and they moved into my space and our communication, and they were able to help me work through that and communicate those things without becoming heavy-handed.

And so, the whole goal was for them to understand where I was coming from, and once I felt understood as a child, I was more willing to work with them as my parents. And my curfew didn't change. In fact, I always had to go home earlier than everybody else, it was just the way it was. But I accepted it because I felt supported from my parents, and I felt like comprehension was there in our communication.

So again, your goal as a parent is to communicate, and the ultimate goal of the communication is for comprehension to occur, where you can work with your child in their understanding, and in turn, they will work with you. And as I mentioned before, as your child gets older because you've done that, they're going to be able to do that with other people. They're going to be able to communicate better, reach a level of comprehension that will allow them to continually communicate even if there are disagreements. So super, super powerful.

Remember, your purpose is comprehension. You want to reach that level. It's not just we're going to communicate about something, and you're going to do it my way, but it's I need to understand. I really need to understand where you're coming from, and I need to feel like, "Hey, I'm in your space, and you can communicate with me because we are trying to understand each other, right?"

Again, comprehension is not an agreement. It doesn't mean you have to agree 100% with the other person, but it does mean that you are creating empathy in the communication that you're having with your child.

Now, I'm going to talk about the second point that I brought up earlier, which are the limitations of communication. As you know, we use words, and we string words together in order to create a reality. So, words in and of themselves are very helpful. However, words are loaded. And what I mean by that is we can use one word, and it can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people.

That is a limitation of our ability to communicate, especially with our children. Now, let me give you an example of this. If I were to tell you to think of a color, okay, and think of the color blue, I cannot guarantee that the color blue that I see in my mind and in the world that I created in my mind is the same blue that you are seeing in your mind.

So when I say things like, "Yeah, blue," you may see baby blue, you may see sky blue. You may see a green, a blue green. You may see a different kind of blue than I'm seeing. For me, I think of the ocean, deep ocean blue, and we're talking rich, like a royal blue when I say the word blue.

But can you see how words are loaded? And when we are not specific enough, when we are throwing out terms, and we expect our children to translate that the way that we mean them, we're going to run into problems. Definitely run into problems. This is why I had mentioned in a previous podcast earlier in the podcast about [Observe and Describe](#). Super, super important skill for parents to master. That skill helps us be able to define things more effectively.

I definitely want to be able to communicate and understand that there are limitations in the way that we communicate. You may think that by saying, "Clean your room," to your child is very specific. And yet to your child and the reality that they've created in their mind, it is not specific at all. [Now, I talked about Observe and Describe in podcast 88.](#) So go back and listen to that because I think it's super good. I think it's one that will be helpful for you.

But understand that as your children are growing and we're using words to communicate ideas and thoughts and creating realities for our children, that what you were communicating may not be what they understand or what they comprehend.

And so if the goal is comprehension, we want to take some extra time to understand that words have limits and that we need to be able to communicate with them very distinctly what it is that we are trying to tell them, right? We want to be able to do that. Words in and of themselves are very helpful for communication because they are shortcuts. However, if we don't understand how loaded words are, it can become a problem.

Now, one of the benefits of words, however, is you can work with your child while making some very specific definitions for them. I wanted to share an experience that I had when I was getting my undergraduate. I was going to school in Hawaii, and it's a different environment than living in the continental US. And in studying languages and in studying communication, because that was an area of focus in my studies, I came to understand that in the Hawaiian language there over 55 words to describe the ocean.

Similarly, Eskimos have a lot of different words to describe snow. Now, those people, so Hawaiians and Eskimos needed those words. They had to create these understanding with these words in order to live in the environment that they lived in. And those things were helpful in their culture and in that context of the environment, so the communication was a lot more clear.

What I found fascinating during my studies was you could give a very specific word describing the ocean, and Hawaiians would know exactly what that meant like the temperature of the water and how many waves were in the water. They could tell how windy it was. They could tell by very specific words that they use.

Now, parents can do this too. You can do this in your home environment by being very specific on what words mean in your communication. So when you say, "Hey, I need you to clean your room." If you have gone through, and you've been very specific about what clean your room means, so your child understand that means picking up all the clothes from the floor, making the bed. If you can be that specific and create that in your home, then the communication is going to be a lot better.

However, children are going to need reminders because they are children. So being very specific in your communication with your children is going to be needed. You're going to have to do that. That's just part of the way that it works.

So we've talked about the purpose, the comprehension part of it, the goal of communication is not just communication. It's about comprehension, and it's about being able to comprehend and communicate with each other where you can be in the space of your child and understand their world the way that they understand the world and then work with them from that point. And then understanding that there are limitations in the words that we use.

Be very cautious when you're giving your child instructions, and the instructions use general terms. You don't ever want to give general terms because in your mind, you're seeing it one way, and your child may be seeing it in a very different way.

Now, the third thing I wanted to talk about is how we should approach our communication with our children. And the approach that we should take when we are communicating with our children are actually just the steps that we find in the skill of Effective Communication.

There are six steps. I'm going to go through them all. And you're going to see how each of these steps help us move from our own point of view and our own understanding into where our child is at and helping them navigate that and gain better comprehension in our communication.

So here are the six steps. The first step is to look at your child or to pay attention to them and what they are saying, right? So this means put things aside and pay attention. You need to pay attention.

The second step is once your child is finished speaking, once they are done talking, you are going to use their words to describe what you understood.

The third step is to ask your child if what you said was what they meant and they'll correct you if you were wrong.

The fourth step is in a calm manner you can state your thoughts on the subject. So you want to be sure that the child agrees and says, "Yeah, that's what I meant." And then you can state your own thoughts after that. That's step four.

Step five is they must repeat what they heard. Affirm they are right or correct and correct them if they are not. So they have to do the same thing that you did in step two.

And then step six is to come to a solution if possible. But if not, you want to repeat these steps, and you can also use the skill of decision-making, right? So let's take a look at the steps.

Step one, look at your child who is talking and pay attention to what he or she is saying. That's just respect. That is showing that your child that when they speak, you will take the time to listen to what they have to say. That helps to build relationship. That strengthens their confidence in what they're saying to you. And that you were there to help them and to understand them, right? This is the first step into moving into their world and being able to help them navigate that and understand it better.

Now, the second step is once your child is finished speaking, use their words to describe what you understood. This is one that is really hard for parents because sometimes children will talk for minutes and minutes, and minutes. 15-minutes have gone by, and they're still talking, right? And parents have the urge to stop them from talking and then to continue on their day because they're busy. They have a lot of things that they need to do.

So you have to measure that out, and you may need to clarify that if your child is speaking too long, because that may be too much to repeat back in their words what they say, and you may say, "Okay, I just want to get the first part, so I understand it. This is what I heard you say," and then you're using their words to describe what you understood.

Be aware. You can interrupt them in their communication with you, but you want to do so in a very kind and gentle way. And only to help them know that you understand what they're communicating and to clarify with them that you're still there 100% paying attention to what have to say.

Step two. Once your child is finished speaking, you want to allow them to communicate as much as they possibly can and should, and then you want to use their words, their words, not your words, their words, to describe what you understood. What I love about this step is it requires parents to really pay attention to what and how their children are speaking because it's important for you to do that.

If you can do this, what that further does is it brings you into their world. When you're using words to describe that they've used, it automatically says, "Hey, they're paying attention. And they understand what I understand. They get it, they get it, and it brings you closer in your goals towards comprehension. Okay? So super important, step two.

Step two is also a precursor for step five, where your child has to repeat the exact same thing but in reverse. So you're actually showing your child how to do this, and then in step five, they're going to do it back to you. You see how beautiful that is?

Okay. Now, step three. Ask your child if what you said was what they meant, and they will correct you if you are wrong. This is absolutely true. Your child will correct you if you're wrong, but you need to ask your child, "Okay. So is this what you meant?"

It's as simple as that. After you use their words to describe what you understood, just ask them, say, "Hey, is this what you meant?" And they will nod, yes. Or they will say, "No, that's not what I meant," and then they'll continue on. And then you would go back to step two. You would wait until your child's finished speaking. You'd use their words to describe what you understood and then wait for them to affirm that, "Yeah, that's what I meant."

So great. You may have to do the dance with step two and step three back and forth if your child doesn't feel understood. Because again, our goal is comprehension. Our goal is comprehension. Now, once your child agrees and says, "Yes, this is exactly what I meant," then step four is you can now share your thoughts on the subject. You can share anything you want on the subject. You want to do so in a kind manner. The way that you communicate with them is going to be super important. But you can state your thoughts.

Now, you are actually in their area and in their world, and by stating your thoughts that can highlight something they have missed or they don't understand, or a different avenue that they need to explore. This is a very effective way to introduce new ideas to your children about a specific topic.

I cannot tell you how many times my child has come to me about an issue going on with friends at school. So let me give you an example of what this looks like when I am communicating with my daughter. There was an incident where my daughter returned home from school, and she was talking to me about what was happening with a specific teacher that she had.

And so I followed the steps of Effective Communication, particularly step one, where I was paying attention to what she was saying. So I put everything aside, and I was looking at her and listening, nodding in agreement as I listened to what she was saying.

In step two, I waited for her to finish communicating what she was saying. What she told me was that she felt like her teacher didn't like her, that her teacher always asked her questions to answer in front of the class and always made her do projects with the rowdy kids in the back of the classroom.

And in addition to that, the teacher always asked her to show how to do things first to the other class members. She felt like the teacher is focusing in on her, and she was really struggling to understand why she felt like she was being picked out from everyone else in the classroom.

Well, I waited until she finished what she was communicating, and then I started to describe back what I heard using her words. So I used her words, which were, "Your teacher always asks you questions. You feel like your teacher's always putting you with the rowdy kids in the back of the classroom to do projects together. And that your teacher always asks you to stand up and do things first," like give her oral report first in front of the class before allowing someone else to do it.

Then I verified with her in step three, if that is what she meant. She nodded yes, and I could see a smile on her face, and she felt understood. Then in a calm manner and step four, I stated my own thoughts on that, and I expressed to her and presented a new idea into her head that perhaps the teacher was doing this because she was a reliable student and that this is probably a way that the teacher could engage the entire class. She knew that my daughter would be prepared with the lesson and that she'd be willing to work with anyone in the classroom.

I mean, those were things that she had not considered before. And so in our communication, she came to a different understanding of maybe the motivations behind them. Then we started talking a little bit about what she could do in order to find out what is happening in the classroom or how to Effectively Communicate with her teacher about her feelings and what was happening.

So this is an example of how using the steps can really draw out a lot of information for you, but also help your children feel validated and understood in your communication. Super, super effective in helping parents reach that point of guiding their children along.

Now, after step four, we reached five, which is they must repeat what they heard. So this is again a repeat from step two. Only this time, your child is going to be repeating what they heard from you. And if you did step two right, if you were right on it for step two, your child is going to know exactly what to do for step five because you've already shown them.

And once you nod, yes, you know that they understand you. There is a synergy that exists in this communication process that is hard to describe in words because again, words are limited, right? But I can tell you in my own interactions with my own family when we reach this point, it's not about disagreeing. It's not about arguing our point. It's not about being right. It's all about empathy and about working together towards finding a solution to any of the problems we're discussing.

So it's super powerful because when everyone feels supported in the communication and everyone feels like they're being comprehended, and that comprehension is high, there is a synergy there of cooperation going on and it's powerful. It is very, very powerful.

We've gone through step one, two, three, four, five, and step six is to come to a solution if possible. So if you're talking about a problem, then yeah, come up with a solution. And the communication at this point will be amicable, and you guys will be friendly, and it will be a very positive discussion on possible solutions.

Now, if you can't reach a solution, you can continue to communicate and go through the steps again until you can figure out exactly where you can open up some additional avenues to explore and to think through, right?

So for parents, how you should approach Effective Communication for comprehension is to just use the steps of the skill of Effective Communication, the six steps. And what you'll find is that it does cover the purpose of comprehension. It also covers the limitations of language because you are forced in this process. You are invited during this process to really be specific about the words that you use and how you use them.

It overcomes that obstacle of things that are ambiguous. It helps you overcome things that are not clear. And by doing this, you also create synergy with your family, greater empathy in your communication. And this idea of connectedness that can't be replicated unless you really take the time to do this.

Now, some parents may think, "Okay, my child talks a lot. I don't have that much time in my day to do that. I am going to challenge your thoughts right now on that topic. Take the time. Take the time to listen. Children grew up way too fast.

If you invest this much time right now, it will pay off in magnificent ways down the road. Take the time to listen to your children and listen until they're done speaking. Put things aside. Laundry can wait. Errands can wait. Yard work can wait. Take the time. You will never regret taking the time to listen. You might regret it while you're listening. And I only say that because if you have a child that loves to talk, it may take a while to do.

But I cannot emphasize enough the reinforcement it gives children to trust you, when you set aside the time. When they come to you and they want to share something with you, and you allow that beautiful time to exist between you, you're going to find down the road that communication is just going to naturally happen. You're not going to have to force it. It will exist.

They'll know when they're in trouble who to go to. They'll know when they're in pain who to go to. They'll know when something exciting happens, who to go to because you've spent the time upfront. So invest that time to do that. Put things aside. Dinner can wait, okay? Let's weigh the pros and cons here. You have dinner on time one night or you listen to your child and build that relationship. Let's honestly think about that.

We want to focus on things that will last longer, so take the time to listen. This has been a topic that I absolutely love. I love Effective Communication. I think it's so powerful, and yet the steps seem so simple. And yet simple things bring about great things, right? [Simple things bring about great things.](#)

[The steps to Effective Communication can be found on the Smarter Parenting website.](#) If you need the steps, print them out and use them, learn them, memorize them, commit them to memory, and to your heart in the way that you communicate with your child and also with everyone else in the world. It is going to be helpful for not only you but for your children. So this is definitely the skill that you want to spend some time to really, really get well.

Now, the next time that we communicate, the second part is going to give you some tools and some ideas on how to communicate when things are difficult, specifically when there are difficult topics discuss, or you feel like your child is shutting you out. The next podcast is going to address how to go about using these steps when there is some tension in the communication.

So I'm excited to share that part with you because I can't tell you how many times I've worked with very resistant youth who did not want to communicate with me at all, but they were court-ordered to do so. And this goes for parents too. So how to communicate during difficult times or difficult issues and around difficult topics, that's what we'll cover in the next podcast.

Again, thanks for joining me. If you haven't already, sign up for individual coaching. Your first session is free, and you can do that on the Smarter Parenting website. I would love to hear from you and to communicate with you. I think it'll be great. So that's it for me, and I will talk to you again later. All right, bye.

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