

Communication Blocks to Avoid

Adapted from *How to Hug a Porcupine* by Julie Ross and the *Active Parenting* program of Michael Popkin

Definition: A communication block is any remark or attitude on the part of the listener that injures the speaker's self-esteem to the extent that communication is broken off.

Communication Blocks	How it sounds	Parent's intention	What your teen thinks when he hears you say it
Commanding	"Stop complaining." "Calm down." "Quit whining"	To control the situation and provide the child with quick solutions.	"What I have to say is unimportant." "I don't count."
Advising	"Next time, you should." "Well, what you need to do is go back to her and explain that. . ."	To influence the child with arguments or opinions	"I never do anything right." "What happens is all my fault."
Placating	"It isn't as bad as it seems." "Everything will be okay."	To take away the child's pain; to make her feel better	"Mom/Dad is lying." "Mom/Dad thinks I can't handle discomfort"
Distracting:	"You know what: let's go out to lunch to take your mind off of it."	To protect the child from the problem by changing the subject.	"Feelings are bad." "I need to bury my feelings or distract myself from them."
Interrogating	"Well, what did you do to make him say that?" "You must have messed up somewhere..."	To get to the bottom of the problem and find out what the child did wrong.	"If something bad happens, it must be because I did something wrong."
Moralizing	"Every cloud has a silver lining." "The right thing to do would be to..."	To show the child the proper way to deal with the problem.	"My feelings don't count except as a way for Mom/Dad to prove a bigger lesson about life."
Psychologizing	"Do you know why you said that? You're just insecure."	To help prevent future problems by analyzing the child's behavior and explaining his motives.	"Mom/dad thinks she knows more about me than I know about myself. No one understands how I feel"
Using sarcasm	"Well, I guess that's just about the end of the world."	To show the child how wrong her attitudes or behavior are by making her feel ridiculous	"I'm a jerk/stupid for having feelings about this."
Being a know-it-all:	"Honey, that's just the way these things go. You have to chalk this one up to the law of averages. By the time you're twenty. . . (blah, blah, blah)."	To show the child that he has a resource for handling any problem; namely, the parent.	"I'm not allowed to feel the way I feel because there's always a bigger explanation that makes more sense than what I think or feel."