



November 2012 MH Column Spotlight: Communication, pt. 2

In September we learned about the 4 different types of communication: aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. I challenged you to become more aware of the communication styles you use most often and to begin to think about the type of communication you are teaching the young people in your life to use. This month we will focus on how to increase assertive communication.

There are many reasons why people struggle to consistently use assertive communication. However, with some practice we can all improve our ability to use assertive communication and to teach the young people in our lives how to use it as well. See below for some tips on using assertive communication.

- **Wait until you are calm to talk:** It's ok to take a break, calm down, and come back to the problem at a later time. You will be much more effective at solving your problem if you are calm.
- **Use a calm tone of voice:** The tone of our voice can impact the message we are sending to the other person. Avoid yelling or using an aggressive tone.
- **Turn off all distractions:** That means turn off the television, computer, music, and/or all cell phones. Minimizing distractions helps you to be able to more effectively solve the problem.
- **Use I statements:** People tend to get defensive when you use the word "you" a lot (for example: "You messed up and you need to change what you are doing so you don't hurt my feelings anymore.") To help keep the conversation calm and productive, try to use I statements (for example: "I felt embarrassed when you told that story to our friends.")
- **Tell the person how you feel and what you need:** Identify the situation that upset you, how it made you feel, and what you need from the other person. I like to use the formula: When _____ I felt _____. Please _____. For example: "When you told our friends that story about me I felt embarrassed. Please don't share my personal information with other people."
- **Listen to what the other person has to say without interrupting them:** your point of view is important as well as the other person's. You don't have to agree, but it is important that each person has the chance to share.
- **Take responsibility for your part of the situation:** If we are really honest with ourselves, there is usually something we can take responsibility for and change.
- **Offer to be a part of the solution:** Offering to work together to solve a problem is often times much more effective than asking someone else to be the only one who makes a change.

Newsletter Version:

August 2012 MH Column Spotlight: Communication, pt. 2

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- **Wait until you are calm to talk**
- **Use a calm tone of voice**
- **Turn off all distractions (e.g. the TV, cell phones, computer, etc)**
- **Use I statements:** To help keep the conversation calm and productive, try to use I statements (for example: “I felt embarrassed when you told that story to our friends.”)
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For example: “When you told our friends that story about me I felt embarrassed. Please don’t share my personal information with other people”
- **Listen to what the other person has to say without interrupting them**
- **Take responsibility for your part of the situation**
- **Offer to be a part of the solution**

Please see the extended version of this column with more information on your school’s website. If you have any questions or would like additional information you can also email me at sbancroft@rsd7.net