

## **Lesson #24: *Following Good Communication Guidelines***

**Divorced Fathers Network  
Advocates Of Shared Parenting  
'Because Children Love Both Their Parents'**

### **Good Communication Guidelines:**

1. The old adage still applies, now more than ever: it's not what you say, but how you say it. Choosing words and tones carefully can make a conversation go further and be more productive than reacting and/or being less careful. With effort and practice, people can control exaggerated responses when their "buttons get pushed." Eventually, those triggers will no longer cause an automatic, emotionally-charged reaction.
2. Assess your communication style, and aim for using a direct communication style, not indirect. Indirect communication involves asking a third party to relay messages (relative, friend, teacher, child). Direct communication can be done a number of ways, including by e-mail, letter, phone or in person. Using direct communication ensures that the message will say what you mean, and be said how you want it to be said. Make sure what you are saying is clear, not expecting the other person to have to read between the lines.
3. Try to make sure the information you receive is also through direct communication, rather than asking a third party about your children or former partner. Remember that asking children to carry information between parents is the least favorable form of communication, as it puts the children in the middle. Use of indirect communication can indicate game-playing or power struggles. It can also simply be a result of fear of direct communication. It's important to note that direct communication requires courage and resolve, as one is taking responsibility for their words and actions. The overall message here for parents is to do their own work, and to leave the kids out of the middle.
4. Review your communications with the other parent, past and present.
  - During your marriage, at what point during the day did you have the most positive exchanges? If your former partner is not a "morning person," then trying to communicate with him/her first thing in the morning will probably not result in the outcome you're hoping for.
  - Review the different forms of direct communication, and decide which is best for you. Some people have great success with e-mail, while others do better by phone. Sometimes your choice may vary depending on the situation.
  - Ask yourself which of the other person's behaviors or mannerisms really gets to you and sets you off. Work on diminishing and changing your reaction to that behavior.
  - Ask yourself what you do that really sets the other parent off. Try considering yourself allergic to that behavior, and avoid it during communication with that person. Sometimes offering the other parent what he/she wants can set a better tone and foster cooperation and positive communication.
  - Determine how each of you avoids talking about a subject you/he/she doesn't

want to talk about. Learn to recognize those behavior patterns, so you can gauge how and when it happens. If you ask the other parent to wait until another time to talk about a particular topic, then make sure to schedule that time and to stick to it. Avoiding subjects and decisions will only work against you and your children.

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