Positive Communication

Four important areas of interpersonal communication are often abandoned when relationships run into hard times. Both parties tend to stop using statements that are Positive, begin with “I”, express Understanding, and demonstrate a willingness to Share responsibility for the situation.

The acronym PIUS can be used to help remember how to get our communication back on track.

1. **Be POSITIVE.**

Include positive comments in your conversation (and avoid negative comments). This not only helps the listener, but also helps you remember that you do appreciate something about the other person. Think of something that you really like about them or just tell them you love them. Become conscious of those things that you tend to communicate in a negative way and reframe them using positive phrasing. (e.g., say what you want, not what you don’t want)

2. **Use “I” STATEMENTS.**

The “I” statement is one of the best communication tools that we have. It helps us to speak to another person in a way that communicates our needs or wishes without blaming or criticizing the other person. When others feel blamed or criticized, they usually become defensive.

   “I feel”: When you communicate your feelings, you have a choice. Blaming your child (e.g., “You make me so mad.” “You always make me sad.”) will put them on the defensive. Accept responsibility for your feelings when communicating with your child (e.g., When you use drugs, *I feel* sad and worried *).

   “I want”: Let your child know what you would like from them in place of a current behavior. Make your request reasonable and something they can actually do (e.g., “I would like it if you could call me if you will be late for dinner.” OR “I would like it if we could spend time together doing something fun.”)

3. **Be UNDERSTANDING.**

Show your child that you care about them and respect them enough to try to understand their point of view (even if you do not agree with it). LISTEN to them. Really listen. Ask questions; reflect back what you hear in a non-judgmental tone. Understanding your child’s point of view will make it easier for you
to find some common ground. When you show that you’re trying to understand something about them, they’re more likely to accept that you have something important to share with them.

4. Accept and **SHARE** responsibility.

Neither one of you is perfect. Understanding and acknowledging your part in the problem goes a long way in breaking out of the pattern of conflict.

“The way you talk to your loved one not only reflects how you feel about [them], but also sets the tone for [their] reactions to you.”  - GYLOS