

8 Communication Skills

Today's Children Lack

I work with couples and see firsthand in marriages the negative effects of technology and social media on basic communication skills.

Our fascination with screens cuts down on the face-to-face interaction needed in relationships. I see it in my kids and their friends. Their obsession with phones, social media, games and text messages is robbing kids today of basic communication skills necessary for relationships with others.

Even worse, I find myself lacking the ability and desire to listen. If I am losing these skills, it is inevitable that our kids will never have them.

What skills are our kids missing out on? Here are eight communication skills kids have lost or will lose if we don't make some serious changes:

1. The ability to speak to others. Children grow up with a tendency toward quick burst communication and miss out on the opportunity to connect. In the process, they miss out on telling stories, living adventures and sharing hurts and challenges.

2. The ability to think and communicate on the fly. Most device-driven communication is filtered, thought-through and processed before delivered via text or email. Face-to-face communication, however, requires us to be spontaneous and think in the moment. A device-driven, text-centered culture leads our kids to edit and control their communication. In-person communication with others becomes awkward because we don't know how to think and speak.

3. Communicating with and reading non-verbals. When we

communicate primarily via text/email, we lose the ability to recognize and read non-verbal behaviors in others. As is often said, non-verbal communication speaks even louder than verbal communication.

4. The ability to be others-focused. When we spend so much time on our phones, we lose the ability to serve and focus on others. A friend of mine who teaches at a public high school notes that when he started teaching, kids in his classes would talk to each other in the hallways and in the classroom. Now when he walks into his classroom, everyone is on a phone and most kids aren't talking to each other. In the process, we become much more focused on our own needs instead of the needs of others.

5. Communicating with authenticity. We can so easily hide behind the world of words and emojis. Face-to-face communication makes it much tougher to hide how we're really doing and feeling.

6. Interacting face-to-face. Sometimes we just need to look someone in the eye, cry on someone's shoulder, laugh with someone or get/give a reassuring hug or pat on the shoulder. The more we rely on written/texted communication, the more we miss out on physical touch, encouragement and affection from a friend.

7. The ability and desire to listen. Our kids don't possess the ability to listen to adults or their friends at the same time they listen to music, shows or games on their devices. Not only do our kids lack the ability, but they lack the desire as well. Our kids choose to ignore or tune out others instead of engaging with them.

8. The ability to build an argument. When our kids are used to communicating in short bursts, they lose the ability to build a case or an argument. So much of life as an adult is centered around putting together cohesive thoughts that build upon each

other. Our kids learned to communicate with emoji's, Bitmoji's and GIFs instead of words which hold them back from putting together deeper thoughts or arguments. {eoa}

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