

How to Avoid a Family Cold War

On Saturday, October 27, 1962 the United States and Soviet Union were on the brink of nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis was in its terrorizing 14th day. Communication between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev had been reduced to a naval game of cat and mouse.

On this particular day, the U.S. Navy repeatedly attempted to surface a Soviet submarine with depth charges. They were unaware that the sub was armed with nuclear warheads. The Soviet sub-captain, furious and unable to communicate with Moscow, ordered the nuclear torpedoes battle ready. Fortunately, he was calmed down by his second captain and a catastrophe was avoided. After the crisis ended, a "Hot Line" was established to ensure quick and direct communication between the heads of state.

Communication breakdowns in the family can cause significant relational barriers. Good communication is essential for maintaining healthy relationships, nurturing our children into adulthood, and avoiding unnecessary conflict. Avoid the Cold War by following these 10 Communication Tips.

1. Breaking Bread. Life for the American family is fast-paced. Hours that used to be spent at the dinner table talking have been replaced by running to activities. Valuable hours of molding and shaping our kids have been taken away. Protect family meal times. Make a point of eating together at least two or three times per week. No TV or phones.

2. On the Move. Don't waste the time your family has in the car running around town. Rather than reverting to music, video games, or the DVD player ... start asking questions. Get them talking. Use open-ended questions.

3. Listen. Developing our children effectively requires getting to the heart. "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." Pay close attention to their words, body language, and tone. Use every sense to go below the surface and connect with their cries of the heart.

4. One-on-One. Spend one-on-one time with each child. When you do, the dynamic changes dramatically. Getting them out of the group environment with focused attention will open them up. Your quiet, less dominant child, in particular probably has a lot to say when given the chance.

5. Walk in Their Shoes. Educate yourself on the issues they face. Peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, dating, school, etc. Ever-evolving issues face your child every day. Know them and stay current. Remember that life is much different now than it was even ten years ago.

6. Texting. This is how a majority of kids communicate with each other. You need to be here. BUT do not be annoying. Keep it short and light. No nagging or lectures allowed. Coordinate pick up times or send them little words of encouragement.

7. The Right Approach. How we guide and discipline our children makes all the difference. Personalities and needs are different. Some need a firm hand, while others need a gentle touch. Measure your approach based on how your child reacts.

8. Get off Their Back. Are your conversations dominated by constant correcting? This can cause a child to lose self-confidence and shut you out. Balance your conversations intently. Choose the right moments to speak into their lives. Give them room to make mistakes and fail. Even ask them if they'd like your opinion.

9. Open Your Book. Share your experiences, both good and bad, with your child. It makes you real and relatable. Sharing builds trust, exactly what you are trying to earn.

10. An Open Door. Be yourself. If you are relaxed and open, your child will respond back with the same. They should know that “your door is always open” to discuss life’s issues. If love and trust exist in your home, communication will flow smoothly.

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