



Michigan Alliance for Families

Youth Self-Determination Series-Handout

Series 2-Session 2

Communication Builders and Busters

Communication Builders

How we have good conversations

Try to:

- Trade information
- Find common interests:
- Listen to the person:
- Watch body language
- Match the mood
- Use good volume
- Use good body boundaries
- Look toward the person

Communication Busters

Makes 2-way conversations difficult

Try to stay away from:

- Taking over
- Interrupting
- Repeating
- Policing
- Risky topics

Communication Builders

How we have good conversations



- Trade information:
 - Have 2-way communication or conversations
 - Ask questions and make comments
 - Learn more about each other
- Find common interests:
 - Find something you both enjoy communicating about
 - May find something you can do together
- Listen to the person:
 - Look at, face, and talk to/communicate with the communication partner
 - Make short comments to show you are listening (oh, uh-huh, wow, etc.)
 - Smile and nod, look away every 5 seconds
- Watch body language
 - Is the communication partner facing me? Looking at me? Talking or communicating with me? Are they giving me the cold shoulder?
 - Watch YOUR body language—are you looking at, facing, talking to or communicating with them?
- Match the mood
 - Try to match the mood of your conversation partner
 - If they are happy, talk in a happy voice
 - If they are sad, talk in a quieter voice
 - If they are excited, be a little more excited
 - Example:
 - Joey is excited to go to Cedar Point and says “I get to go to Cedar Point Saturday!”
 - Joey’s friend Cole says: “That is so cool, I have never been there!”
- Use good volume
 - Not too loud or soft—in the middle
 - Watch your communication partner’s body language, can they hear you? (are they leaning in)?
 - Are you talking too loud (are they backing away or squinting?)
- Use good body boundaries
 - About an arm’s length away
- Look toward the person
 - Look at their forehead if you cannot look at their eyes
 - Be careful not to stare - look away every 3-5 seconds

Communication **Busters**

Makes 2-way communication difficult

Try to
Avoid!



- Taking over the conversation
 - This is a 1-sided conversation
 - Be careful not to take over the conversation/communication and just talk about your topics or interests
 - Be sure you communication partner gets a chance to talk or communicate
 - Ask questions so your communication partner gets a chance to talk
- Interrupting
 - Wait for a pause or break in the communication
 - Be careful not to interrupt
- Repeating
 - Be care not to say the same exact thing over and over as your communication partner may get bored
 - Ask them a question or make a comment on the topic so they can respond
- Policing
 - Telling people about the rules
 - Telling them how to do things
 - Telling them when to do something
 - Telling them how to act
 - Policing can happen at school, home, work, other places
 - People don't like to be told what to do
- Risky topics

THINK about the topic, be careful, it might be **risky** to talk about.

 - Could risk offending others without knowing it
 - Could risk becoming a problem for you
 - May upset some people or could get you in trouble
 - May be too personal-you may not know the person well enough
 - If you are not sure if it is risky, don't say it. Talk to your parents or other trusted adult.
 - Examples of topics that might be risky:
 - Weight
 - Sex and gender
 - Money
 - Age
 - Skin Color
 - Religion
 - Politics

- Body parts
- Speech difficulty
- Wheelchairs
- Body sounds (like burping, coughing, hiccups, etc.)
- Anything that could hurt or offend someone

Think it or Say it?

STOP and THINK

- Could this be a **RISKY** topic?
- Could someone not understand?
- Could someone's feelings be hurt?
- If so, **THINK** it, don't say it
- If we **THINK** something
 - It may or may not be true
 - We **THINK** a lot of things
 - Thoughts pop in and out of our head
 - Not always okay to say something
 - Need to think before we say it