

- Learn to express your anger in a constructive way.
- Express your values and allow your children to express their own.
- Avoid unkind words.
- Build up your children. Don't tear them down. Let your body language and words say, "I love you," not "I am bored with you."
- Enjoy evenings together without the radio or the TV.
- Sit down together at the dinner table and have family discussions.
- Give your family members your complete attention when they talk to you.

Communication patterns in families are matters of habit. Bad habits can be turned into good habits. What communication habits in your family could you change for the better?

# Putting Knowledge to Work



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GALE A. BUCHANAN, DEAN & DIRECTOR

# TIPS FOR PARENTS

Improve Your Family  
Communication



The University of Georgia

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## Improve Your Family Communication

Good communication is a basic tool of strong families. It is a challenge for many parents and their children. Families must commit to building better communication skills each day. Doing so creates an environment where each person feels loved, needed, and important. The way we feel, talk, listen, and react has a major effect on our family life.



Communication is much more than just an exchange of words. It includes:

- What we say
- How we say it
- What we mean
- What the other person thinks we mean

Successful communication happens when the message you send is the same as the message your listener receives. Have you noticed that

you can say something and your listener may take it the wrong way?

### We communicate in two ways:

- Nonverbally (without words)
- Verbally (with words)

### NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

A newborn communicates without saying a single word. A baby communicates by crying, smiling, or gurgling.

Adults can also express feelings and needs without words. In fact, some experts say that more than half of all communication is nonverbal.

“Body language” means the messages we communicate through body movements.

These include:

- The tone of our voice
- The look in our eyes
- The tensing of muscles
- The shrug of a shoulder
- A raised eyebrow
- The drumming of fingers
- The tapping of a foot

Nonverbal communication is very important, but it is also easily misunderstood. For example, crossed arms might mean the listener disagrees with you, or it may mean that she is cold. Nonverbal signals vary by the culture or the part of the world where you grow up. So be especially careful to use *verbal* communication to make sure that you don't misunderstand *nonverbal* signals.

### VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Verbal communication seems more straightforward. You can let the other person know exactly what you are thinking, right? Wrong!



Words often mean different things to different people. “Late” to a parent may be midnight, while “late” to a teenager may mean 2:00 a.m. That’s why it is important to spell out exactly what you mean, and then to check what the other person thinks you mean.

Words can be emotionally loaded. They may bring out feelings in people that you did not mean to bring out. Words can also be misinterpreted.

Communication depends upon listening, not only to the words, but also to the feelings and needs behind the words.

### Ideas for improving communication:

- Create times to be alone with your children.
- Focus on their good qualities.