

POSITIVE WORDS

LESSON TEN

Follow-up *(As a family discuss the assignment for the lesson Understand First.)*

1. How are we doing in our efforts to try to understand before we try to be understood?
2. Has someone made progress in this area that they would like to share with the family?

Concept

Communication can be negative (*unkind*) or positive (*kind*). When we speak unkindly to one another it destroys the loving atmosphere we want in our home, and it makes family members feel unhappy and unloved. On the other hand, when we speak in a positive and kind way to one another, our family is happier. Those who hear praise, encouragement and loving words usually have good feelings about themselves and they can more easily be loving and thoughtful to others.

Let's show our appreciation and love to each other by the way we talk.

How we're spoken to often determines how we feel about ourselves. Those feelings, either good or bad, help determine our self-talk. An example of negative self-talk is, "I'm so stupid!" An example of good self-talk is to think, "That's not like me. I usually don't make mistakes like that."

Self-fulfilling prophecies are things people say to us that sometimes affect the way we act. For example, if a child is told, "You'll never be a good athlete!" he may believe it and never improve his athletic skills. On the other hand, positive comments work wonders. For example, when a parent says to a child, "You are a very obedient boy!" they encourage obedience by helping the child believe he always obeys. It is so important to speak positively, because people usually become what they are told they are.

Below are some negative and positive comments which can help determine behavior and character.

Negative

"You'll probably fight over this new toy."

"You are so disobedient!"

"It's about time!"

Positive

"I know you're going to share this new toy because you are sharing children."

"I'm sure you'll obey right away next time because you usually obey so quickly."

"Thanks so much."

“Well, somebody finally gave in!”

“You kids are always quarreling!”

“Mom, you never understand me!”

“You’re such a peacemaker in our family. Doesn’t that make you feel good when you choose the right?”

“It’s not like you to quarrel. You usually get along so well.”

“Mom, usually you try to understand me. Could you try a little harder to see how I feel about this?”

Family Survey Review

Statement #10. **We speak kindly to one another and try not to criticize.**

- How does our family generally speak to one another?
- How can we be more positive and less critical of each other?

Story

In a small Mexican village, a man named Jose had a terrible argument with his son Pedro. During the argument Jose and Pedro angrily criticized one another and spoke very harshly. The next day Jose discovered that Pedro’s bed was empty. He had run away from home.

Overcome with remorse, Jose knew that his son was the most important thing in his life. He wanted to communicate his feelings to his son. Jose wanted somehow to get a message to Pedro. The father went to the store in the center of town and posted a large sign that read, “Pedro, please come home. I love you. Meet me here tomorrow morning.”

The next morning Jose went to the store where he found five boys named Pedro who had also run away from home. Each boy had answered the call for love, each one hoping it was his father asking him to come home.

Discussion

1. Sometimes do we say things in anger that we don’t really mean?
2. We all want to be loved. Name some ways we can communicate love to others.

Activity

For our activity, we’re going to change negative statements into positive ones. Let’s take turns and do one statement at a time.

- “You are a slow runner!”

Example answer: “With practice you can be a fast runner!”

- “I can’t do that.” *Example answer: “I’m having trouble with this. I’ll try it again.”*
- “You never agree with me!” *Example answer: “Usually we agree on things. Can you try looking at it this way?”*
- “How can you be so stupid?” *Example answer: “You know, I’ve made that same mistake myself!”*
- “I hate you!” *Example answer: “I feel really angry at what you did!”*
- “I’m ugly.” *Example answer: “I want to look better.”*
- “Our family can’t spell.” *Example answer: “Spelling isn’t what we’re best at, but look at all the words you spelled right!”*
- “You can’t ever do anything right!” *Example: “You usually do this well. Why don’t you try it this way...”*
- “Our family doesn’t ever have any fun!” *Example: “I’d like to have more fun with our family. How about if we....*
- “Shut up!” *Example: “Please be quiet.”*

Assignment

Choose one or more of the following assignments:

1. Try each day to turn negative comments into positive ones. Remember that any habit is hard to break. Be kind to yourselves and have patience with one another as you try to improve. As you help one another speak more positively, it will be easier to improve. Read the Additional Solution For Success: Positive Speaking.
2. Read Family Storybook.
2. As a family participate in one or more of the Solution Suggestions.

ADDITIONAL SOLUTION FOR SUCCESS

POSITIVE SPEAKING

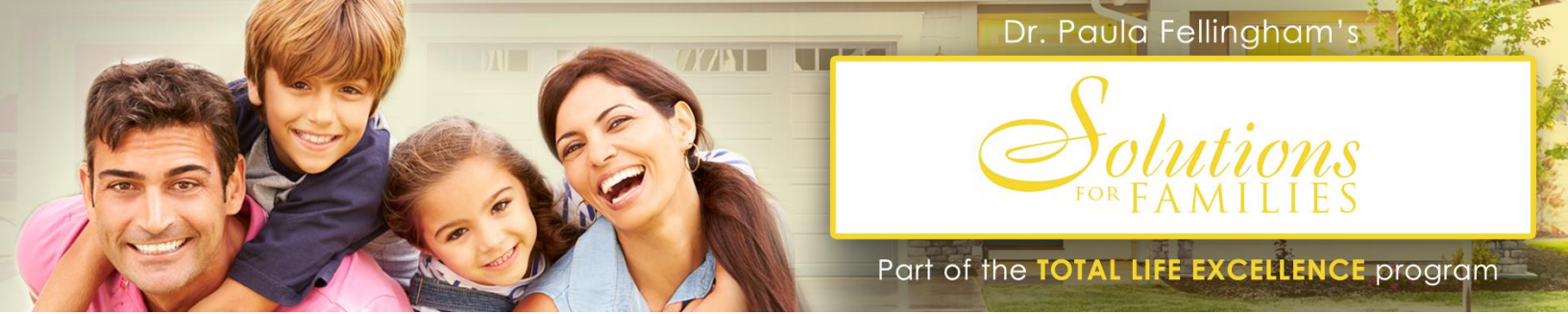
Positive speaking shows kindness. It aims at strengthening relationships by building up the other person.

What are the benefits of positive speaking?

3. You have the opportunity to express yourself. If you speak in a positive way, people will listen to you more readily. That gives you opportunities to influence people for good.
4. It helps build a positive self-image. Speaking positively, giving praise, compliments and words of appreciation are all wonderful ways to build a person's self-image.
5. It builds trust in a relationship. Sincere positive speaking tells people you are not trying to manipulate or take advantage of them; it encourages them to trust you.
6. It encourages cooperation. Positive speaking encourages cooperation and friendship.
7. It promotes honest, open communication. A person will usually open up and speak honestly and frankly with someone who has shown they care by speaking kindly.

Focusing on the positive while speaking to others helps put life and relationships in perspective, especially when things seem to be going badly. It says, "We are in this together and we are going to win."

Marital therapist Richard Stuart believes that uncensored communication may be more than a relationship can bear. We shouldn't say hurtful, unkind things simply because we believe them to be true. Strong families understand this and work toward a type of measured honesty that is kind. Too often people use the excuse "I'm only being honest" to be overly critical. This is destructive to relationships. Be sensitively honest, speak positively and always



be kind.

ACTIVITY

FAMILY STORYBOOK

Most people think there's something special about their family, and that feeling strengthens family unity. Family members share good times and bad, ordinary days and special occasions. Every family has a rich store of experiences, traditions, and memories which are meaningful to them. This activity can help you think about some of the things that make your family special.

Activity

1. Explain that everyone who wants to participate can help write and illustrate a special book about the family. Discuss some things family members might write about from the list below, or make up your own ideas.
8. Encourage family members to write as many "stories" as they want. It is a good idea to plan what they want to write about, and even try a rough draft, before copying the final version into the book.
9. Decide on a "deadline" for having all stories ready to put in the book.
10. Encourage family members who enjoy drawing and coloring to illustrate their stories.
11. Include snapshots and photographs where appropriate.
12. Set up a time when everyone can be involved in putting the book together.
13. Once the book has been written, don't stop there. Keep it up-to-date by encouraging family members to add more writing and art from time to time.

Storybook Suggestions

Depending on the ages of the children, suggest that family members consider the following options for telling your family's story:

Pre-school and elementary-age children:

- Draw pictures which illustrate what other family members have written.
- Suggest an event that youngsters will be able to remember and tell about. Examples: the funniest thing Mom ever did; the time Dad fell off the sofa; why we love our pet; etc. Have the child dictate his or her description of the event to a parent or older brother or sister. Be sure to copy what is said, word for word.

Elementary school children:

- Describe a family tradition, outing or other event that holds special meaning for you.
- Describe a funny incident or “inside joke” that involves your family.
- Write about your family from the point of view of the family’s pet dog or cat.
- Write about yourself--your special hobbies, your favorite things to do, your likes and dislikes.
- Describe something about your family that’s different from other families.
- Write about what it’s like to be _____ years old.

Older children:

- Describe various aspects of family life (a typical Monday morning; what happens at dinner time; how family chores are divided; etc.)
- Describe the family as if you were writing a special feature about them for a newspaper or magazine.
- Write about why the family’s pet is just like another member of the family.
- Describe one of the happiest/saddest/funniest/scariest/most exciting/etc., things that ever happened to the family.
- Write about what it means to be a big brother or sister.
- Describe your earliest memories of younger brothers and sisters.

Parents:

- Write a family history or time-line that includes important dates and milestones in the family’s life.
- Describe the different places the family has lived.
- Keep a section for jotting down all those interesting things children say.
- Describe what it means to be a parent.
- Write about family members who are no longer living, but will always be remembered in loving ways.

SOLUTION SUGGESTIONS

14. Set a family goal to speak with kind tones in the home.
15. During the following week, practice the skill of actively listening to one another.
16. For one week, everyone make a special effort to express appreciation to family members for good things they do.
17. Talk about effective ways to resolve conflicts in your family.
18. Discuss as a family how to get help with problems and frustrations before they become crises.
19. Each day this week, family members answer the telephone cheerfully.
20. Try during the coming week to label family members in positive ways. Example: "Angela is a peacemaker in our family."
21. Set a goal to have one-on-one, deep communication with family members regularly.
22. Set individual goals to look people in the eyes when you speak to them.
23. Make it a regular practice to use meal time to talk about family member's daily activities.
24. Parents, in the car take the opportunity to talk meaningfully to your children and teach them.
25. At the dinner table, sometime soon, ask "What if?" questions. Examples: "What if your best friend lied to you. What would you do?" "What if your friends ask you to do something you don't believe is right. What would you say?"
26. Schedule a "Family Story Night" when everyone tells a story.
27. Sometime this week have a family discussion about tough issues like drugs, sex, death.
28. Parents, make a tape about your childhood for your posterity.
29. Phone a loved one and ask how they're doing. Let each family member take a turn to talk and express their love.
30. Each family member give a compliment to someone every day of the coming week.
31. At your next dinner meal, everyone in the family share one good thing that happened during the day.

32. Parents, teach children never to interrupt someone who is speaking.
33. Help an older person make an audio tape of their life.