


Communication habits to avoid when talking to your spouse

- Avoiding difficult subjects.
- Faking attention.
- Listening only for facts – ignore your spouse’s feelings.
- Being  in a hurry.
- Criticizing – making judgements about what your spouse is telling you.
- Assuming you know what your spouse’s problem is before he/she has expressed it.
- Thinking of your next response rather than listening to what your spouse is saying.
- Closed mind – you think you are always right and your spouse is wrong.

Roadblocks to Communication



- NOT LISTENING
- Listening only for facts, ignore feelings
- Avoid difficult subjects
- Lecturing
- Threatening
- Closed minds – if you think you're always right and children are always wrong
- Criticizing – making judgments about what your children are telling you
- Nonverbal gesture
- Tone of voice

Parenting Styles

Authoritarian (Brick Wall)

- Parents demand absolute obedience.
- Parents control their children - no discussion.
- Children are afraid of being punished.
- There is an emotional distance between parents and children.
- Children may rebel (drugs, alcohol, sexual activity). This is a way of getting back at parents.

Permissive (Jelly Fish)

- Parents do not set any rules for their children.
- Children do whatever they want.
- Children are confused, because no one cares.
- Children feel insecure. They may look for escape through drugs or alcohol. They may try to find a sense of belonging through sexual activity or gangs.

Authoritative (Backbone)

- Parents care about their children's behaviour.
- Parents set rules for their children and enforce consequences.
- Children are involved in decision-making, but parents are the final authority.
- Children understand the rules, so they are more willing to accept them.
- Parents change the rules as children become more responsible.
- Parents teach children how to think - not what to think.

Parenting Styles Notes

- In North America, there are three styles of parenting. These are: authoritarian (brick wall), authoritative (backbone) and permissive (jelly fish).
- Many immigrants think that Canadian parents are permissive parents because of what they see on TV. They believe children are free to do whatever they want and they have no rules. This is not true for all Canadian families.
- Many immigrants know about the brick wall (authoritarian) style of parenting because their parents used this style with them. Parents use physical punishment to discipline and control children. Children are often afraid of their parents.
- Note: In Canada, it is against the law to beat, hit or hurt a child.
- Some parents think that letting children do whatever they want is an easier way to be a parent. They may have too many other stresses to deal with every day. But children do not want jellyfish parents.
- Children need rules. When families set rules and limits the children know that their parents care about them.
- All parents have rights. They also have the responsibility to teach and discipline their children. Discipline is not the same as punishing or controlling children. The goal of discipline is to guide and give direction to children, so they will learn how to become responsible people.
- Children need to make important decisions every day. For example: whether or not to follow what their friends are doing - missing school, smoking, drinking, having sex etc. That's why parents need to teach their children *how* to think (not just what to think) and how to make good decisions.
- The **backbone** (authoritative) style of parenting is a better approach for guiding and helping children learn how to think and make responsible choices.
- In this parenting style, there is communication between parents and children. Parents listen to their children. Children are allowed to share their thoughts and feelings without fear of punishment or rejection. However, the parents are still the ones who are 'in charge' of the family.
- Parents may need to change their parenting style. A backbone family stays connected. Family members are better able to deal with the challenges of living in a new culture when they stay connected to each other.

How children learn values

Set Example → Be the kind of person you want your child to be.



Tell → Tell your child what you like and what you do not like. Tell your child why.

Discuss → Talk to your child about everyday Situations - newspaper stories, TV programs, what happened at school.
Talk about WHY you like (or do *not* like) what someone is doing.
This is a good way to teach what you value.

Strengthen → Praise your child when he or she behaves in a way that matches your values.



Listen → Be open to hearing your child's point of view.
Be patient as your child searches for values which are important to him/her.

Helping children grow in a new culture

1. Stay connected to your children

- Where are your children going?
- Who are your children's friends?
- Know what is happening – at school, with their friends.

2. Spend time with your children

- Go to church/mosque/synagogue together.
- Do household chores together (grocery shopping, cooking, washing dishes etc.)
- Go for a walk with your child just to talk to him/her alone.
- Have a family discussion while eating a meal together.

3. Talk/ provide guidance/listen

- Talk to your children about your beliefs and why they are important to you.
- Talk about behaviour that is acceptable or not acceptable to you.
- Show interest in what your children think by listening to them.
- Set rules and limits. Talk about why these rules are important (safety, respect, family harmony).
- Make new rules as children get older and show you that they can be responsible for their behaviour.

4. Try to understand your child's adaptation

- Adapting to a new culture is difficult for children.
- Do not reject your child. Your child will find other people to connect with – boyfriend or girlfriend, using drugs with friends, joining a gang, etc.
- Ask your child: “How does it feel growing up in a new country?”

5. Your relationship with your children is important

- *Change* is part of adapting to a new culture.
- This does not mean that you have to change everything. Keep the important things from your culture.
- Talk about family stress and learn new ways to solve problems.
- Ask yourself: What is more important? Keeping everything from my culture or making **some changes** to keep my family together?

Effective Listening Skills

- do I **listen**?
- do I **hear** what my spouse is trying to tell me?
- do I **give full attention** to my spouse when he/she talk?
- do I **show interest** in what my spouse is saying to me?
(eg. nodding, eye contact, leaning forward etc.)
- do I **ask questions** if I am not sure what my spouse is telling me?
- do I **allow** my spouse to express his/her thoughts and feelings?
- do I **appreciate** what my spouse is telling me even though he/she has a different opinion than me?
- do I **try to understand** my spouse's point of view?

Listening is important for building a good relationship.

Homework assignment:
Before the next session, try to practise
listening skills with your spouse.



Effective Listening Skills

- do I **listen**?
- do I **hear** what my children are trying to tell me?
- do I **give full attention** to my children when they talk?
- do I **show interest** to my children when they are talking to me? (eg. nodding, eye contact, leaning forward etc.)
- do I **ask questions** if I am not sure what my children are telling me?
- do I **allow** my children to express their thoughts and feelings?
- do I **appreciate** what the children are telling me even though they have a different opinion than me?
- do I **try to understand** their point of view?

When I listen, I am showing my love, concern and caring for my children. **Listening** is important for family connection.

Homework assignment:
Before the next session, try to practise listening skills with your children.



Cultural Adaptation

What is culture?

Culture is the way of life shared by people who live in the same place.

What is culture shock?

Culture shock is the physical and emotional discomfort a person feels when he/she moves to a new country. The person does not know what behavior is appropriate in the new culture. The person may not speak the language and does not understand how to do things like make a doctor's appointment, which bus to take to an appointment etc.

What is cultural adaptation?

Cultural adaptation is when a person adjusts to the new country in a positive way. Each person will adapt to the new culture in their own way.

Stages of Cross Cultural Adaptation

A person who is new in a country might have different feelings during the first months or even years. It can help you to know how you might feel. How long the feelings last will be different for each person.

(Stage 1) The honeymoon phase: This is when everything is new and exciting.

(Stage 2) The transition period: This is when a person realizes that he or she must work to adjust to the new culture. This is a difficult stage. The person might feel sad about being in a culture he/she doesn't understand. The person misses their own familiar culture. It might feel like he/ she cannot control things in this new life.

(Stage 3) Getting information about the new culture: The person begins to understand how to do things in the new culture. She or he is learning the new language. The person might compare their "home" culture with the new culture.

(Stage 4) Develop a new identity: The person understands that the new country has good things and bad things to offer. The person creates a new identity. She or he chooses which things to keep from their own culture and which things to add from the new culture. The person begins to set goals for life in the new country.

Ideas that can help you adapt to a new culture:

- Find ways to meet new people. Make new friends by inviting people out.
- Establish a new routine as soon as possible.
- Look after your health.
- Learn about culture shock. Accept that it is a normal part of coming to a new country.
- Learn about the customs and habits of the new country.
- Watch how people from the new country act and talk. This will help you understand some things about the new culture.
- Learn about the history of the new country.
- Keep contact with people in your community whom you feel comfortable with.
- Look for places to be with people so you can practice the new language.
- Allow yourself to feel sad about leaving things behind in your home country. Talk to a friend or a counselor about how you are feeling.
- Be patient with yourself. This is a difficult process to go through, but it can make you a stronger person. (What have you learned about yourself?)
- Accept that you might not always do it right when you first try something new. Establish simple goals and congratulate yourself when you have success.
- Do not feel embarrassed to ask for help. There are resources available to help you.

Who to contact if you have a problem?

If you need to talk to someone, a counselor is available to you at **Mount Carmel Clinic**. The Multicultural Wellness Program provides support for newcomers in Canada. Your appointment with the counselor is confidential.

You can contact the counselor at 589-9420 or 589-9426. Mount Carmel Clinic is open from 8:45 AM to 5:00 PM.

You could talk to a counselor about many things like:

- How to deal with problems adapting to the new culture
- How to talk with your family and friends
- How to deal with loss and feeling sad
- How to have a positive outlook in life during this time of change
- How to deal with a crisis
- How to solve a problem
- How to learn a new skill

Sharing values with your child

1. How do I show it?

2. How do I use words to tell my child?

3. How do I encourage appropriate behaviour in my child?

4. How do I encourage my child to tell me his or her point of view?

What if:

What if my child does not accept all of my values?

Could we still find some values that we share?

How would we do that?
