



CHI St. Alexius Health

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Employee Assistance Program

Family Communication

Vital to a happy and healthy family





Making Time for Family Communication

Families are busy. School, children's activities and parents' work schedules make it hard to find time to spend together. Families spend less time eating meals together and have fewer family talks because they have less free time. It is important to make time to talk. One place many families utilize is in the car. Families spend a good deal of time in the car going from one activity to another. Parents might make time to talk to children at bedtime. Another idea is to have "dates" with a family member for one-on-one time. Having a family meal together is a good way to find time to talk as well.

With cell phones, busy schedules, and children's activities, keeping family members informed can be challenging. Here are some ideas to keep communication open when there just doesn't seem to be enough time for it:

- *Use a white board to list daily activities.*
- *Use a day planner or activities calendar.*
- *Note each family members' schedule.*
- *Have family members leave notes about where they are and what time they will be home.*
- *Ask that everyone use the same place to post a note.*
- *Ask that family members call and check when plans change.*

Effective Family Communication is Key

Communication within the family is extremely important because it enables members to express their needs, wants, and concerns to each other.

Open and honest communication creates an atmosphere that allows family members to express their differences as well as love and admiration for one another. It is through communication that family members are able to resolve problems.

Just as effective communication is almost always found in strong, healthy families, poor communication is usually found in unhealthy family relationships. Poor communication is a common complaint of families who are having difficulties. Poor communication is unclear and indirect. It can lead to numerous family problems, including excessive family conflict, ineffective problem solving, lack of intimacy and weak, emotional bonding. Poor communication is also associated with an increased risk of divorce and marital separation and behavioral problems in children.

Communication is good when you feel safe to say what you believe when you feel the need to say it!

Keys to Building Effective Family Communication

One of the most difficult challenges facing families today is finding time to spend together. It is extremely important for families to make time to communicate. Talk in the car; turn the TV off and eat dinner together; schedule informal or formal family meetings to talk about important issues that affect your family; and talk to your children at bedtime.

Communicate Clearly & Directly

Healthy families communicate their thoughts and feelings in a clear and direct manner. This is especially important when attempting to resolve problems that arise between family members. Indirect and vague communication will not only fail to resolve problems, but also will contribute to a lack of intimacy and emotional bonding between family members.

Be An Active Listener

Being an active listener involves trying your best to understand the point of view of the other person. Whether you are listening to a spouse or a child, it is important to pay close attention to their verbal and non-verbal messages. As an active listener, you must acknowledge and respect the other person's perspective and clarify if you do not understand.

Pay Attention to Nonverbal Messages

Effective communicators pay close attention to the non-verbal behaviors of other family members. Watch for what a family members' facial expressions or body language may be telling you.

The "Green Light" Approach



One of the best ways to promote open communication in the family is through family meetings. A good approach to family meetings is called "Green Light" communication. Once you find an agreeable time and place to meet, introduce a topic, or encourage a family member to do so.

The meeting must be non-blaming and solution-oriented. Keep them to about 20 minutes and include 10-15 minutes for review and closure. During "Green Light" communication, all suggestions are acceptable, and none of them are ruled out, no matter how unrealistic or bizarre they may seem. This helps to promote participation and fun and assures everyone an opportunity to be heard.

Once all suggestions have been presented, a process of elimination is used to select the most realistic and workable solution based on the judgment of the majority of family members. The family then agrees on how to implement the solution.

Through this approach, families learn to listen to each other and value the opinions of others. The result can be greater understanding and hope that things will get better!

For more information on
family communication, contact your:

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(701) 530-7195 or **800-327-7195**

st.alexius.org/eap



Shaded states represent EAP service locations.

Remember your Employee Assistance Program is:

- **Confidential:** All information is strictly between you and the counselor.
- **Informal:** A simple phone call starts the process, and there is no red tape.
- **Free:** Your employer has paid the fees. There's no charge for initial counseling services.



Employee Assistance Program

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