

Incredible Ways to Communicate That Result in Incredible Kids!

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One of your jobs as the parent of a child(ren), is to teach that child the language, and to help him or her communicate. What you help your child develop in this area will last a lifetime. In this report, we'll take a look at what communication is, review some of the common things we know about communication, and then offer you some special techniques and "tricks" to facilitate your incredible communication with your kids, so that they can communicate with you and their world to share their incredible selves. To be able to "get your message across" is a key element in living lives that are fulfilling, successful and satisfying.

What IS Communication?

A great definition for "communication" that I was once given is "to communicate means to be able to take the picture I have in my head, and transfer it into your head, with the least amount of distortion." Just like the pilot of your jet airliner, we want our communication to be so clear that we can easily and confidently reply "copy that" whenever we exchange communication.

Communication occurs on many levels; and children are sometimes painfully aware of communications from parents that come just with the raising of an eyebrow or the tightening of a jaw, communications of which the parent may not even be aware. We're talking about verbal communications in this report; but keep in mind that children are *very sensitive* to a parent's nonverbal communication, too. While you read this report, and learn the super techniques we've included for you, remember that communication also involves:

- The tone of your voice
- The cadence of your voice
- The volume of your voice
- Your body language—what "message" does your body give?
- Your emotions, especially long-held emotions, which can bleed through unbeknownst to you
- Your beliefs, judgments, and criticisms
- Your choice of language—are you peaceful and loving, or upset, angry and abusive?
- Your ability to listen, and how you listen, including the nonverbal message about whether you have time for your child
- The respect you accord yourself and to your child

There is much you can do to help your child develop his or her Incredible Self, just by the way you communicate with your child. Interestingly, as you change the way you communicate with your child, you are likely to become a better communicator in all aspects of your own life, too. This is one of the ways parenting your child allows you to grow and develop your own Incredible Self!

Review of Past Wisdom on Communication

For a long time, now, parents have been cautioned to use "I messages." When you tell your child "I'm having a hard time with what you're doing," it's a very different message than "You're bothering me by what you're doing," or "What you're doing is bad." "I messages" let your child know that you are sharing your own reaction to what is happening, but not necessarily making a judgment or criticism of your child.

I remember once feeling angry at my son's father, from whom I was separated. With my own upset running over the top, I spoke to my three year old son as we traveled together in the car, saying things I didn't like about my ex-husband's behavior, ending in a question to my son: "If you were the Dad, would

you do that?” My son, wise beyond his years, used an “I message” to set me straight. “No, Mom, I wouldn’t do that....but my Dad is a different person!”

Now that’s communication! I “got” the picture my son had in his little head; the transfer was complete.

“I messages” give your child an opportunity to recognize that each person can have his or her own reality and experience in the world, including her! This will help as your child becomes a teenager, when his job becomes one of separating, as an identifiable individual, from you and his family. The benefit for you, even as your child is growing up, is that your child will learn to give “I messages,” too. Can you imagine how great it will be to have your child tell you “I am having a hard time listening to you. Will you speak softer to me?” instead of “You’re mean” or “Nobody has a mother (father) as awful as I have!”?

Another advantage to “I messages” is that we’re teaching our children to take responsibility, to stand firmly behind what they are communicating. Responsibility is one of the seven Building Blocks of self-esteem. As we utilize “I messages” with our children, we build our own self-esteem; and model one way for them to build self-esteem. Receiving these messages is easier for your child. And as your child communicates back with “I messages,” s/he builds self-esteem, too!

Another “rule” from the past: Keep messages short.

Most people have difficulty remembering or responding to long messages. Especially very young children need simple language, and a short message that is as clear as you can make it. It’s interesting to experiment with saying what you want to say in three sentences or less. That’s a lot more difficult for most of us that you would imagine. It’s fun to start practicing when children are small, so that they (and you) grow up hearing your clear, short messages.

Like many parents, mine lectured me whenever they wanted me to learn something. Now children don’t really learn a lot from lectures, but we tend to treat our children the same way we were treated, so I lectured when I became a parent. One thing I noticed was that whenever I got started lecturing, I went on and on and on, seeming unable to slow down or to stop. I could see my 10 year old daughter’s eyes glaze over; and still I lectured. She and I both knew I was over the top with my lecturing; but we did not talk about it. One day, I decided to invite my daughter to be my “growth partner.” I pointed out that I was aware of what I did, but I didn’t seem to be able to stop myself. I asked her if she would help me by saying something to me when she had enough talk and thought she understood my message. We agreed she would say “I got it, Mom,” when she reached this point; and I would make every effort to stop lecturing. It wasn’t long before I began a lecture. My darling 10 year old looked at me, after two minutes, and said “I got it, Mom.” I didn’t stop on a dime, but I did taper off and finally end the lecture. Not only that, I noticed that I felt embarrassed! Even though we both knew I had been over-lecturing, her communication to me that one time was enough for me to severely curtail the behavior on a permanent basis! Now that’s powerful communication!

Active Listening is another communication tool from the past. It involves letting your child know that you have heard her message. “You think I’m being unfair when I help your sister and interrupt listening to your story.” “I heard you say that you’re tired and want to go home.” “You want my help whenever you do your homework, is that right?” Our children really benefit from having parents who take the time to listen, communicate what they heard, and listen without immediate judgment, advice or criticism.

When my son was 16, he was attending college across the country. He called me to discuss a very delicate personal issue. When we were completing our discussion, I told him how touched I felt that he trusted me with such a delicate and personal issue. “There’s a reason I do,” he told me. “Do you want to know what it is?” When I said “yes,” he continued, “If just once, in all the years I’ve been telling you sensitive stuff about me, you had done so much as suck in your breath in shock or surprise, I would never have told you another thing.” All the work I had done to listen first, without immediately putting out my personal reaction, had enabled me to maintain that part of my communication with my precious son.

“Playing Pilot” A fun game to play that involves listening is to experiment with following the rule that the person hearing the communication must repeat back what s/he has heard, before being allowed to make

a statement. If you say something to me, I must tell you what I heard. You get to tell me if I heard correctly. If I did not, you repeat your message and I tell you again what I have heard. We do this until I get it right. Only when I accurately report what you have said to me am I allowed to make my own statement.

If you have ever listened to airline pilots communicating with the tower during takeoff and landing, you'll recognize this "game." Any directions given to pilots from the control tower are repeated, word for word, back to the pilot, followed by a "Roger" or "copy". This ensures that both parties know (and agree to its correctness) exactly what has been said. Since most people in everyday life are concentrating on what they want to say next, instead of what the other person is telling them, this is a very difficult game for most of us! Playing it will allow everyone to become a better listener; it might even ensure safety, as it does with airline pilots.

These ideas about communicating that have been around for a while are very valuable for parents.
Make them a part of your communication tool kit and use them often and wisely.

Newer Communicating Ideas

The Two Saddest Words

Do you know the two saddest words in any language? An *Atlanta Constitution* journalist, Arthur Gordon, wrote a lovely story about these two words, telling of a time when he was confused about something in his life, and turned to "The Old Man" (a psychiatrist who was a friend) to help him out. After listening to his dilemma, the Old Man invited Arthur to return to his office to listen to recordings from people with whom he had worked. He played statements from three different people, such as a widow who was saying "if only I had been more understanding of my husband, I would feel better about myself now that he is gone." A teen boy was remorseful about his performance as a basketball player, and stated: "I'd be a better player, if only I had practiced more." A businessman had missed out on a very lucrative business deal because he was too busy. "If only I had realized how big this deal was, I could have stopped working on the other deal I was brokering; but I didn't and I lost over \$60 million!"

The Old Man asked Arthur Gordon if he could point out the same two words that each of these three people spoke. They are "if" and "only." "If, only" are the two saddest words in any language, The Old Man told him. That's because they keep us frozen, and focused on the past. As long as we are focusing on the past, we cannot move forward. They promote feelings of guilt, and block our creativity. Convinced The Old Man was correct, Arthur Gordon asked him "If you don't say 'if, only,' what can you say instead?" Without hesitation, The Old Man told him to substitute the words "Next Time." Talk with your child about what you want him to do "next time," because you can't change what has already happened. By doing this, you go along with a Principle I have long followed, which is to "pay attention, not to what you want to overcome, but to what you want to *become*." Paying attention to what you want to "become" is a powerful way to get out of any problem situation, and gives your communication a place to travel.

I told this story to my son. When he was 12, I was driving him home from school one day when he told me something he had done that led me to be angry with him. I told him, in no uncertain terms, how angry I was with him. When I at last caught my breath (I was in one of those protracted lectures again!), he said simply: "You're right, Mom. I made a mistake. What do you want me to do Next Time?" I was so surprised I started to laugh! My son had conveyed to me that he heard me, taken responsibility, and asked me to help him move into new behavior, all with a simple statement that followed Arthur Gordon's advice!

Any time you and your child are having a difficulty, try sharing with each other what you would like "next time," instead of going over and over what has happened in the past that "if, only" it had not occurred, you would feel happier!

D.E.S.C. Plus A Step

Many years ago I taught classes on Assertive Communication. I came across a method, invented by Sharon and Gordon Bower (authors of *Assert Your Self*), they called The D.E.S.C. method. Sharon and Gordon taught Assertiveness for Canada College, a small college below San Francisco. They reported discovering that most people *want to* speak up when they are unhappy, feel pushed around, or want something different than what is happening, but they didn't know *how* to do it. Obliging, Sharon and Gordon Bower created a simple method for their students, which turns out to be a wonderful tool for anyone who wants clear communication, especially when the topic or situation is challenging or difficult to do.

Telling a teenager, for example, to clean up his or her room, often brings resistance and reaction. How do you ask your child for compliance without setting off this reaction? Use the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step Approach!

Here's how that would work. For greatest effectiveness, speak no more than three sentences for each of the steps in the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step Method.

D.E.S.C. is an acronym. It stands for

- Describe
- Express
- Specify
- Consequences

We add "Plus-A-Step" to complete the process.

It's Sunday afternoon and you walk past your teen's room, noticing that it is in such a tangled mess that no one can walk in there without stepping on clothes, books, electronics, shoes and sports equipment. You want to ask your teen to clean the room, yet you'd like to avoid confrontation. You know that speaking in terms of yourself is safer, because your teen is frequently quite defensive and frequently reports feeling criticized whenever you ask for behavior different than what you are seeing. Accordingly, you decide to use the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step process.

You say:

D. describe: "When I look at your room, I see things everywhere, with no possible way to walk in it."

You have now "described" *what* is happening. Note that there is no judgment and no blame—just description. In this step, it is vital to merely describe what you observe as the situation.

E. xpress: "When I see this, I feel overwhelmed. I also feel my ability to take action choked off by all that is in my way. I want to run from this place."

You add your *feelings*. In attempting to express feelings here, most people try to use the words "I feel that..." Do you know what word comes after "I feel that..."? "You"! When you use the words "I feel that..." you're in the process of sharing a thought, not a feeling; and the thought is usually about "you," instead of "me"! Expressing feelings means I say "I feel..." and then insert the feeling. "I feel overwhelmed." "I feel sad." "I feel angry." "I feel loving." Now, you're talking feelings! Be careful!

S. pecify: "What I would like is for you to spend an hour cleaning this room up, before today is over. I want your room to have no more things on the floor and with your clothes either put away or in the laundry."

You ask *specifically* for what you want. Most of us are good at telling others what has happened and how we feel about it; but then we don't tell the other person what we want! We also tend to not be specific, asking for such things as "I want you to clean up your room so you feel better," or

“I want you to do a good job of cleaning.” Lacking specificity, our child does not know what we really want. Your teen may believe s/he already feels good, or may have a different definition of “good job of cleaning” than you do (most do!). Being non-specific means you will thwart your own intentions of clear and effective communication with your child. Don’t let fear or guilt get in your way. Do both of you a favor—be clear about exactly what you want.

C.onsequences: “If you will clean your room as I describe, you’ll have a happy parent and a greater likelihood during the week of being free to do things that come up that you really want to do.”

If you’ve ever heard the term “WIIFM,” you’ll understand this step. “WIIFM” as an acronym for “What’s in it for me?” When we know “what’s in it for me,” we’re more likely to cooperate. In this step, you want to offer your child a *positive consequence* for taking action on your request. Again, it’s important to be as specific as you can be. Specific is clearer. Look for the most positive consequence, including special privileges that may accrue, improved relationship with you, approval from themselves or someone else, or creating beauty or happiness.

This is the outline of the D.E.S.C. method developed by Sharon and Gordon Bower. Some years ago, as my daughter, Liz Schroeder, was teaching communication skills to engineering students at the University of California in Davis, California, she asked for my D.E.S.C. Method materials. When she tried the D.E.S.C. method with her students, they were very dissatisfied with it! They complained that it was namby-pamby and incomplete. To satisfy their need, Liz added the “Plus-A-Step” portion of the method.

Plus-A-Step: “Will you do this?”

Simple. It’s all about “closing the deal,” just as a car or real-estate salesman would do when you go shopping for a car or a home. Ask the person with whom you are communicating to close the deal by making a commitment to do what you have specified. Remember, that person always has a right to say “no,” so just asking “Will you do this?” does *not necessarily* mean you will get compliance! If this happens, be willing to walk away with an incomplete deal. However, if you use the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step approach too many times without compliance, you’ll need even more powerful tools!

There you have it, the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step Method for communication. You *Describe* what is (or has) happening, then *Express* the feelings that come up in you when this happens. Then you *Specify* what you would like instead, provide a *Positive Consequence* that can accrue to your child or teen if they do as you request, and get their *Commitment* to follow through on the *Plus A Step*.

When I first learned the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step Method, I was amazed at how many places it worked for me. When I had difficulty with the way a teacher was approaching or treating my child, I found it was easier to work out when I used the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step approach. When my ex-husband asked me to make changes in our financial agreement, I used the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step Method to deny his request. I was amazed to receive a note from him stating that he was disappointed that I wouldn’t agree to his proposal, yet he was *grateful at the amount of thought and work I had put into considering his request!* In reality, it had taken me only a few minutes, yet the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step approach was so complete we both benefitted! Feel free to experiment with your spouse, co-workers, children, neighbors, extended family, etc. Try the D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step approach anywhere you want to have clearer, more productive communication.

After a while of experimenting with and using this method, it will become second nature to you. Also, without even discussing the method, in the not too distant future, you’ll find your child using the method with you! And you’ll appreciate how much clearer s/he can be with you.

When my son was in the fourth grade, he started going to a school for which he rode a school bus each day. At the school, there was a traffic circle where busses and parents stopped to pick the children up. One day, I instructed him not to get on the bus because I was planning to take him to an after-school dental appointment. I arrived at the circle just in time to see his bus ready to leave the circle and begin its route

home—with my son waving to me from a front seat! I watched as he remembered he was to be with me, got up and talked with the driver, who subsequently let him off the bus. When he arrived at the car he was flustered, and said forcefully to me “The next time you need me to get off the bus so you can pick me up, you have to give me a note for the bus driver!”

Now, I was a bit tired and not at my best. “Well, if you had remembered your dental appointment, you would not have gotten on the bus in the first place!” I snapped back. That’s when my son used the DESC method on me. “Mom,” he said, “when you say ‘if you had remembered your dental appointment you wouldn’t have gotten on the bus in the first place,’ that hurts my feelings. What I’d rather you say is ‘Well, son, we all make mistakes.’ If you would say this, I’d be happier to get in the car with you! Will you do that?” Immediately, he snapped me out of my foul mood. Laughing, I told him I’d do my best to either give him a note and to be careful to speak in a way that would not hurt his feelings! I appreciated him for being so clear in his request. I immediately recognized that he was using the D.E.S.C. approach, even though I had never directly taught it to him!

Thank you, Sharon and Gordon Bower, and Liz Schroeder. The D.E.S.C. Plus-A-Step Method of communication has been a boon to my life and to my relationship with my children. I bring it to you here so it can be a boon to your life and your relationship with your child(ren)!

Do You Really Intend To Hurt Me/Cause Me Pain?

Sometimes people say mean or unthinking things. Even parents. Peers, especially, can say hurtful things. Kids can sometimes say things that are painful for the parents, too. Won’t it be nice to have a technique you can use, and teach to your children, for dealing with such mean or painful statements on the spot?

An ancient, universal principle says “The only time we have power is in the present.” You have the greatest power to correct a painful communication experience when you do it *at the time it is occurring*. This technique, which I like to call the “Do you really intend to . . . response,” is designed to use as close as possible to the very moment someone is saying something that you find difficult or painful.

Suppose your child is angry with you and pulls the classic “I hate you” or “You’re a mean Mommy (or Daddy).” You feel crushed. You can ask your child this: “Do you want to say something so I feel hurt?” Now sometimes your child might actually say “yes”. (If so, stop talking at this point, regroup and deal with this through a different approach.) Usually, however, your child will either not intend to hurt you, or not be aware of being hurtful. If so, when your child says “No, I don’t want to hurt you,” you can offer this response. “Great. I’m glad you’re not meaning to hurt me. In that case, can you say what you’re saying a different way?”

This is VERY powerful with adults in your adult life, as well. As a person who was filled with anger for many years of my adult life, I know that so much anger was spilling out of me that I sometimes said things that others experienced as very cutting and mean. I didn’t intend to be cutting or mean; nor was I aware that the way I was stating something was hurting someone else. At first it was difficult to get this feedback from others. Eventually I found, however, that to have my attention drawn to what I was communicating was very helpful to me, giving me a chance to become aware of myself, and also to change how I was communicating.

At certain ages, some children actually do intend to be mean. If your child uses this technique and the other child says “Yes, I want to be mean to you,” what then? One of the most useful tools to use at any age is that of “Personal Policy.” If you have ever tried to do business with a company whose agents answer you with the phrases “Our company policy is . . .”, you know how powerful a policy can be. Individual humans can have policies, too. And they’re just as powerful. For example, you can teach your child to say “Well, my policy is not to hang around with people who intend to hurt me!” When followed by walking away, this is about as powerful a communication as a person can create.

This technique is simultaneously teaching your child personal boundaries. Establishing and keeping personal boundaries is a powerful ability that your child can use for his or her lifetime! Even though on some levels we are all connected, one of the big jobs of childhood is for a child to get to know him or her self SEPARATE FROM OTHERS. This includes getting to know our “wants” and “don’t wants,” establishing a healthy and caring relationship with our body, and determining the amount of space in the world that we will allow ourselves to take up. “Boundaries” are a way of loving ourselves. We need first to know where we begin and end (and be able to set limits about how others treat us within our own space), and THEN work to determine whether, who, and when we let others into our personal space.

That’s what happens as our children grow up. Once these parameters are set, they are free to merge with others again, as people do when they fall in love and marry from the late teens and onward, into adulthood.

Communicating Compliments

I once complimented my six year old son, lavishly praising his actions and thanking him. I thought I was building his Self-Esteem and he would feel good from my praise. Instead, he became furious with me! I was very puzzled. I could not understand why he was angry when I offered him a full and specific compliment (the very best compliment I could create)!

“Perhaps,” said my wise friend, “your son experiences you as ‘up there’ talking to him ‘down there.’ I do not think he likes that position very much. When you tell him your version of how he’s doing, he feels talked down to!” It had never occurred to me that my compliments would not be welcome. This advice, however, made sense to me, especially with the reaction I had set off in my son.

I learned that a better thing to do was to write my appreciation down on paper (in very simple words), describing what my son had done, commenting on how it contributed positively to our family, and saying “thanks.” I was instructed to hide the paper in his room, and allow him to find it at a later time. It worked like a charm! My son was able to read what I wrote, consider it separate from my enthusiastic verbal comments, and decide which parts he wanted to accept! If you have a child who has difficulty accepting your compliments, try this!

In general, communicating compliments is important, especially when you:

- **Speak specifically** instead of generally. (“I really like the fact that you got everything off the floor of your room,” instead of “You did a good job in your room.”)
- **Compliment actions**, not character or personality. (“I love the way you helped us clean up the house today” instead of “You were so good today; you’re such a wonderful child!”)
- **Speak your own feelings** (“I feel happy when you work with me to do family chores,” instead of “It’s good when everyone works together to do family chores.”)
- **Take care not to manipulate with your compliments** ; don’t expect anything back, make sure you don’t have a strong feeling in yourself of “needing” to get something in return for your compliments.
- **Give compliments as your gift**—something you give freely
- **Speak from your heart** about things that really matter to you; don’t make anything up.
- **Be brief.** Long messages are harder to hear and harder to remember
- **If appropriate, accompany with a hug or squeeze.** We all loved to be acknowledged through touch.

Eventually, your child will start giving you compliments, too! Be sure to receive your child's compliments with a simple and warm "thank you." Your child is doing what s/he can to give you positive energy. That we certainly want to receive graciously. Don't automatically return the energy. Just receive. This will help your child learn to receive, too. (Even though most religions teach some version of "It's more blessed to give than to receive," the plain truth is that *someone* has to *receive*, otherwise others will have no one to whom they can give! Learning to receive is doing your part in making giving possible for others!)

Listening is Different for Boys and Girls

Studies have been shown that demonstrate that females hear differently than males. Men tend to listen with one side of their brain, while women tend to listen with both sides. You may already have noticed that your son has more difficulty remembering being talked to if he was concentrating on something other than your message when you made a comment or asked for something. Or, perhaps you have found your daughter picked up much more of a conversation you were having than you expected or wanted her to hear! This is likely because boys/men and girls/women hear differently.

When you listen with one side of your brain (boys), you can really concentrate—even to the point of cutting out conversations or events that are going on in your immediate vicinity. For this reason, it is important to make sure you have the full attention of your son before you offer your communication. Calling your son's name and making sure he is listening, having him stop for a minute to look at you and listen fully, or perhaps playing the "pilot game" (having him repeat back, what he has heard followed by a "Roger,"), are all good ways to make sure the "full attention" part of your son's brain is on you and your message! If you don't make a point of getting his full attention before delivering your communication, the fact that your son may miss some of what you have said to him is likely not a problem he has, but is the result of how he listens and hears.

Short, to-the-point messages are important with both boys and girls. The longer your message, the less is remembered. Often, parents believe a good "talking to" (lecture) is what a particular situation requires when their child is not functioning as the parent wants him/her to. In my 40 years of experience as a Marriage and Family Therapist, parental lectures are the *least likely* to penetrate to your children's mind. In fact, as a professional speaker, I have learned that people remember more of what comes out of their own mouth than they recall of what comes out of someone else's mouth. Keep this in mind when you are hoping to get important information/lessons into the mind of your child. Finding out what your child has in her head may also surprise and delight you!

Girls, who listen with both sides of their brains, are not as good at concentrating, but are quite good at paying attention to several things happening at once. If there are two conversations going on near your daughter, and you ask her to listen to just one of them (for example, you're having a talk; and the television is on nearby), your daughter's attention will jump back and forth between the two. The result is that she will really hear neither! Your daughter will hear you talking to her even without you calling her name or getting her full attention, usually, so you can start most conversations even if you don't have her full attention. If something else is going on nearby, however, you may lose her attention as she experiences difficulty keeping her full attention directed to the conversation you are conducting.

Neither of these ways of listening is wrong, right, or deserving of judgment. When we understand what is going on with our children, we parents can accommodate some and ensure more complete communication!

Kinesthetic, Auditory, Visual, or Feeling

Likely, you have been introduced to the notion that each person learns differently, based on his or her "learning style." In the early part of the last century, everyone was taught in the same way, regardless of how he or she learned best. This resulted in some very bright children being labeled "dumb" or unteachable. In reality, most often the problem was that material was not being communicated to the child in

a way s/he could receive it. When you want to communicate with your child, you'll do it best if you understand how s/he best learns/receives communications.

Now we know that some children (especially boys) learn and understand better when they are moving their bodies. They may also learn to spell or write by physically feeling letters and moving them into place on a board. These we call **Kinesthetic** learners.

Some children are **Auditory** learners, meaning they learn/understand better when they hear the communication. These are children you can talk with about important matters as you are driving somewhere in the car. They'll be able to hear, remember and catalog your conversation for later retrieval and use.

Visual learners understand communication better when it is presented visually. Such a child may prefer to read the instructions when helping you put a toy together, rather than have someone tell or show them how to do it. Pictures, graphs and visual demonstrations are great ways to communicate with the **Visual** learner.

Emotional/Feeling learners retain communications that are paired with emotions, whether through direct experience, emotion conveyed through stories, or observation. When you want your **Emotional/Feeling** child to really hear your communication, you will know that pairing the communication with a strong emotional experience (doing something fun together, for example) will ensure that the communication is received.

Gratitude

In the classic movie *Ordinary People*, which stars Mary Tyler Moore and Donald Sutherland, there is a fantastic scene in which the mother (MTMoore) has prepared breakfast for her teenage son. At last he comes to breakfast, but he's depressed and doesn't have much of an appetite. When he shows his lack of enthusiasm for the meal prepared for him, his mother immediately grabs his plate and begins to stuff the pancakes and other breakfast items down the garbage disposal! It's a classic demonstration of The Law of Gratitude.

Communication between you and your child will be easier for you when your child understands The Law of Gratitude. It says: "When you're not grateful for what you get, you tend to get less." Or, stated another way, "When you're grateful for what you get, you tend to get more." Children need to know that when they are grateful for the "crumbs," "loaves" tend to follow. Teach them to notice and communicate the gratitude they feel for what they see, hear, experience and have in life, including with you. This is easily modeled by communicating the gratitude you feel—for things in your life, the behavior or attitude of your child, or for working out difficulties. Teaching this "Law" will help your child to lead an abundant and full life.

Think about what Mary Tyler Moore does in *Ordinary People*. Instead of trying again and again to please your child by offering three different menus (as many parents do), experiment with what happens when you take all the food off the table and put it into the disposal. Children who learn The Law of Gratitude early in life look incredible to the adults they're around, because they notice and express appreciation, rather than merely feeling entitled (and perhaps bored)! Communicate this important principle to your child to help him or her have a much, much better life!

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In her brilliant book, *A Nation of Wimps*, *Psychology Today* editor Hara Mareno shares what she discovered about how *much* parents today do for their children, either because they feel guilty at not being available because they are working, or because they are concerned their children will not get the same advantages that were open to them when the parents were growing up. In communicating, it's important to allow and encourage your child to communicate for himself or herself! If the child wants to make contact with a friend, teach her how to communicate with that friend, whether in person, by phone or via text message. Role play what your child wants to say, offer suggestions (if your child wants help—ask!), or tell

your child “what some other kids have said” in such a situation. Help your child come to his own conclusion about what he wants to say. Be careful about “triangulating,” that is, speaking to someone on your child’s behalf and becoming the “go-between” communicator, when your child could actually talk directly to that person and speak up for herself! “Wimps,” Mareno tells us, are not capable of being good citizens in a democratic society (they’re terrible at making choices or taking independent action). Help your child become a great citizen by supporting and encouraging him to do his own communicating!

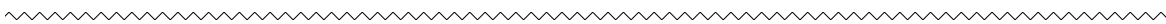
In the preceding pages, I’ve offered you a review of communication wisdom from the past, and then shared with you six newer areas relevant to communication. These include The Two Saddest Words, The D.E.S.C. Plus-a-Step Method, the “Do you really intend to...?” Response, special tips on Communicating Compliments, How Listening is Different for Boys and Girls, “Types” of Learners, including Kinesthetic, Auditory, Visual, or Feeling that can help you understand what kind of communication has the best opportunity to be heard by your child, and the Law of Gratitude. Play around with these, practicing each until you find out how well it may work for you and your child.

Childhood is all about being able to be carefree, experiment, and getting to know ourselves and our world as if we were exploring a Wonderland, like Alice did in *Alice in Wonderland*. Above all, remember to have fun with your child as you learn and practice great ways to communicate. One of the gifts your child holds for you is to remind you of the joys, laughter, lightheartedness and pleasure of being a child. Communication doesn’t have to be serious. It can be fun!

The ability to communicate is a tremendously important part of childhood. Your child relies on you to help him/her, a “newbie” to this earth, to learn all s/he can possibly learn, most of which comes as a result of complete communication. Do not underestimate the power of this ability, while still remembering to have fun. Experiment with making up communication games, or exploring everyone’s intuitive abilities. Perhaps you’d like to explore a different language together, too, even one of gibberish or Pig Latin.

As a parent, you are interested in raising an “Incredible Child.” We want that for you and your child, too. “Incredible Children” are children who are living as much in their own personal power as their age, abilities and experience will allow. Each Incredible Child will have special abilities that stand out. Yet each also needs a basic kit of tools to help navigate life and relationships. Great communication is one of the most valuable of these tools.

How fortunate your child(ren) is to have you for a parent. By reading and applying what I’ve written for you in this report, you have a better ability to help your child remain the Incredible Person he or she came to the earth to be! I am Grateful to YOU! Your child will be grateful to you for a lifetime, too, for taking the time and making the effort to both BE a great communicator AND to teach your child to communicate brilliantly, too.



Ilene Dillon, M.S.W. (MFT and LCSW in California), is the developer of “Conscious Parenting,” a parenting method that redefines the job of being a parent. Taught to audiences around the world, Ilene has dedicated herself to helping people raise Incredible Children who are self-determining, make their own decisions, are emotionally literate, immune to peer pressure, and who live consciously on this earth. You can relieve the usual pressures of parenting by becoming a Conscious Parent, allowing you to grow and fulfill your own life purposes while raising the most Incredible Kids! Ilene’s own Incredible Kids are now in their 20’s, 30’s and 40’s, allowing her to attest to the fact that the incredibility of Incredible Kids lasts and lasts and lasts!