

Getting Along with Family Members

Good communication skills help family members learn to get along with each other. They help to reduce conflict and help everyone to feel understood. Three communication skills will help family members get along better. They are:

1. Sharing feelings
2. Using I-messages
3. Providing encouragement

Sharing Feelings

Children learn to share their feelings when parents use active listening and "I" messages. Parents use active listening when they:

- Stop what they are doing and give time to their child's needs.
- Pay attention to what the child is saying by watching his or her expressions.
- Listen to hear how the child is feeling.
- Use simple words to restate what the child said.

When parents use active listening, children learn:

- To talk about their feelings.
- That other people have feelings like theirs.
- That they are loved and valued.
- To get along with other people.

Using "I" Messages

I-messages help parents tell children how they feel. They can use them when they are mad or frustrated instead of yelling, blaming or nagging. They can also be used to say thank you. There are three parts to an I-message.

They are:

1. I feel _____ (use emotion)
2. when _____ (describe a specific situation)
3. because _____ (say how it affects you).

Here is an example:

1. I feel upset
2. when mud is tracked across the floor
3. because I have to stop what I am doing and clean it up.

Many good things happen when parents use I-messages.

- Children learn that parents have needs, too.
- Children learn how their actions affect others.
- Children learn to share their ideas and help to solve problems.

Providing Encouragement

A parent's main job is to teach their children to be competent and productive people. Parents can do many things to encourage their children to develop the skills they will need as adults. They can:

- Allow children to become self-sufficient by letting them do chores appropriate for their age.
- Give children verbal encouragement. (For example, "I feel happy when you hang up your coat.")
- Emphasize how much children have already learned.
- Demonstrate how to do a job and work with children until they are able to do it by themselves.

Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com. Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.