



Family communication is a vital tool, especially during this time of COVID-19. When we share thoughts and feelings in a safe and structured environment, we can build stronger relationships between family members at home. Effective communication can coax expression out of your children through a collaborative foundation built on trust, listening, and understanding. In which, all members of a family can feel comfortable and secure in their relationships and roles. Below are some effective communication phrases to avoid and try. Do not be too hard on yourself when trying these! Practice and let others know you'd like to try something new or strengthen your already keen skills.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNGER VOICES*

PHRASES TO TRY

Encouraging:	Please tell me more. I'm interested in what you and your sister were doing.
Clarifying:	When did the problem or argument happen? What did it mean to you?
Acknowledging :	I can see you feel really angry about your brother not sharing his snacks after you shared your drink with him. I can appreciate now why you feel that way.
Normalizing:	Many people feel the way you do about not returning to school this academic year. It is normal to feel that way.
Empathizing:	I can appreciate why you might feel angry about not playing at the park with your friends during these times.
Soliciting:	I would like your advice about how we might resolve you being bored. Can you tell me what you think should be done? Tell me more about what you want. What would you like to see happen to have more fun?
Mirroring:	You told me you're "doing okay" with not being in school, but I also noticed that you put your head down. Could you share a little more with me?
Supplementing:	Let me build on that and see if I am on the same track as you are, you are spending more time at home which you say "it's boring" and no time with your friends who you have lots of fun with. Let me support what you are saying with another point: you are having to find new things to keep you distracted since you can not do interactive activities outside of our home. Not only that, but you have had to adjust to online classes for school.
Openly Inquiring:	I'd like to ask a question about that. How did it feel when you saw him using your tablet? What would you like to see happen instead? Help me understand why you prefer others don't use it. Why is that important to you?
Reframing:	If I understand correctly, you feel sad when s/he hits you because it hurts and it's mean. Is that right?
Responding:	If I understand you correctly, you see the problem as me being too demanding when I ask you to do your homework. Would you like to know how I see it? I see it as a way to help you learn and be successful in school.

*Used with permission by J. Saul.

Summarizing:	Let me see if I understand what you just said. You like watching TV alone because you can really focus without any distractions from your little sister. Is that correct?
Validating:	I appreciate your willingness to raise these issues about your dad and me being too hard on you during these hard times for everyone. I know it took a lot for you to be as open as you were and I want to acknowledge you for taking that risk.

PHRASES TO AVOID

Ordering:	You must clean your room now. You have to clean it now. You will clean your room now.
Threatening:	If you don't take care of your brothers while I'm at work, I won't buy you your Hot Cheetos.
Preaching:	It's only right that you should help me around the house. It's your duty as the oldest sibling.
Lecturing:	Here is why you're wrong, I'm the adult and you're the child and what I say goes.
Interfering:	What you should do is stop playing all those video games.
Judging:	You'll never change, you're always going to be messy.
Blaming:	It's all your fault. You are the problem here.
Accusing:	You lied about your sister's bruise. You started this game of tag inside the house, after I told you not to. You never listen.
Categorizing:	You always don't listen the first time I ask you to do something around the house. Every time this happens you do the same thing. You never do what I ask the first time.
Excusing:	It's not so bad that you forgot to take the chicken out of the freezer after I asked you to do it. It wasn't your problem, I should have taken it out before I left.
Personalizing:	You are only thinking of yourself. You are the problem.
Assuming:	If you really respected your parents, you would take care of the things we buy you. I know exactly why the tablet is broken. You don't care about how long it took me and your dad to be able to buy it for you.
Diagnosing:	You're just trying to get attention by fighting with your siblings. What you need is to act like your age and care for them. This is a stage you're going through.
Prying:	What are you hiding? Are you playing that video game I asked you to not play again?
Labeling:	You're being unrealistic, emotional, angry, and uncooperative. This is typical of kids... You don't care.
Manipulating:	Don't you think you should start doing your own laundry? It would be a big help for me not having to worry about it. Is that really too much to ask?