



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 try and avoid. 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 OLDER VOICES*

PHRASES TO TRY

Encouraging:	Please tell me more about how you've taken care of yourself lately. I'm interested in your resilience. I'd love to know what strategies have worked for you.
Clarifying:	When did the conflict happen? Who else was involved? What did it mean to you?
Acknowledging:	I can see you feel really frustrated about not being able to hang out with your friends. I can appreciate now why you feel that way.
Normalizing:	It is normal to worry about a family member catching COVID-19. Many people feel the way you do about this issue.
Empathizing:	I can appreciate why you might feel upset about not spending time with friends.
Soliciting:	I would like your advice about how we might resolve the issue of different preferences in bedtime within our family. Can you tell me what you think should be done? Tell me more about what you want. What would you like to see happen? Why do you think that would work?
Mirroring:	You told me you're "doing fine" with all the news about the pandemic, but I also noticed that you hung your head down. Could you share a little more with me? Or, if your child says s/he feels "trapped" you can ask "What could I do that might open the way to a solution?"
Supplementing:	Let me build on that and see if I am on the same track as you are: right now you are having to spend <i>more</i> time with family members that "know how to push your buttons," and you have lost face-to-face time with your friends. Let me support what you are saying with another point: you are having to find new hobbies at home since you cannot access many of your favorite places to go. Not only that, but you have had to adjust to a new format of online classes.
Openly Inquiring:	I'd like to ask a question about that. How did it feel when you saw him wearing your headphones? What would you like to see happen instead? Help me understand why you prefer others don't use them. Why is that important to you?
Reframing:	If I understand correctly, you felt hurt when we only focused on the one school assignment you didn't complete, because your hard work on the other five assignments went unacknowledged. Is that right?
Responding:	If I understand you correctly, you see the problem as me being too demanding when I ask you to help prepare dinner. Would you like to know how I see it? I see it as a way to help you

*Used with permission by J. Saul.

	develop a life skill for success in adulthood.
Summarizing:	Let me see if I understand what you just said: it has been challenging to adjust to the radical change in our routines over the last few weeks. Is that correct?
Validating:	I appreciate your willingness to raise these issues about respecting your personal space while we are sheltered in place. 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 do the dishes now. You have to do them now. You will do the dishes now.
Threatening:	You don't even want to know what will happen if you don't calm yourself down. You'd better calm down or else. You'll pay if you don't calm down.
Preaching:	It's only right that you spend time with your siblings. You ought to be more involved with them. It's your duty to be a responsible older sibling.
Lecturing:	Here is why you're wrong about the time commitment needed for online classes. I'll tell you what it takes to do well in online classes. Don't you realize how to be successful?!
Interfering:	Here's how it should go: start your daily schedule by 7:30am. What you should do is set your alarm. It would be best if you got up early.
Judging:	You are hurting your family every time you do badly on a school assignment. I know all about your school problems. You'll never change.
Blaming:	It's all your fault that your sister has a cough. You are the problem here.
Accusing:	You lied about how long you washed your hands. You started this when you only washed your hands for 5 seconds. You won't listen.
Categorizing:	You always prioritize your friends over family. Every time this happens you do the same thing. You never spend time with your family.
Excusing:	It's not so bad that you used my credit card without asking. It wasn't your problem that I left the wallet on the counter.
Personalizing:	You are only thinking of yourself when you stay up late making noise. You are the problem.
Assuming:	If you really respected your elders, you would call your grandmother to check on her. I know exactly why you haven't called her. Kids don't think about anyone but themselves.
Diagnosing:	You're just trying to get attention by stirring up drama with your peers. What you need is to focus on school. This is a stage you're going through.
Prying:	What are you hiding? Have you been talking to that kid I don't like again?
Labeling:	You're being unrealistic, emotional, angry, and uncooperative. This is typical of your generation. You teenagers are all so lazy.
Manipulating:	Don't you think you should eat a little better? To really stay healthy, you should have a better diet than that. Do you really have enough vegetables on your plate?

