

The Power of Effective Communication
for You and Your Family

Seeing Eye to Eye



By Mia Redrick

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Finding Definitions eBook:

Seeing Eye to Eye: The Power of Effective Communication for You and Your Family

Each family is a little community. Every day is full of communication - parent and child, husband and wife, sister and brother. As there is love in every family, there also is sometimes conflict. Children are learning and parents are learning, mistakes are made, and ultimately everyone grows. The key ingredient in maintaining the healthy balance of tranquility and growth in every family unit is universally the same - effective communication.

Right from the Start



Children are born communicators. From the moment they see our faces, they are “talking” to us. Every mother knows the little shadows of a smile, the crinkling of a nose, the way the eyes follow your face - from the very beginning we are sharing thoughts and feelings. Your baby’s face is mesmerizing to you and your face is mesmerizing to him. You bond together by noiselessly looking into one another’s’ eyes. When our children start to laugh and smile, we are even more enchanted. We thrill at those flickering first smiles, and we’re overjoyed to hear those first bubbles of laughter. Our children are listening from the very beginning, also. Long before your child says his first words, he understands much of

what you are saying to him. And the silent, unspoken communication continues, also - you know from your child’s expression and the look in his eyes whether he’s happy or hungry, sleepy or alert.

Learning the Language

Researchers say that babies’ babbling varies from language to language - the grammar and syntax of a language are actually distinguishable in “baby talk.” This means that even before they have the capacity to understand and form utterable words, children have spontaneously learned the underlying template of the language we speak. As their open eyes and open ears absorb our expression and our words, they are assimilating volumes about their

environment and the people in it. For many years to come, communicating will be the primary way your child learns and grows. How can you maximize your potential as a communicator with your child? How can you establish healthy patterns that will build your relationship with him as he grows from a child into a teenager? As moms, we are blessed with much instinct about how to do this. But we can also benefit from learning techniques and strategies that will enhance our effectiveness.

One to One

If you are a stay-at-home Mom, you are able to spend much time interacting with your baby. If you are working, you will treasure the time you can spend with your baby "one to one" very much. To make the most of the time that you have, remember to:

- Keep it quiet. Keep background sounds like television and radio to a minimum when you are with your baby. This will give her the maximum opportunity to hear your voice, and for you to listen to her "answers."
- Sing to your baby. Sing your favorite song. Sing a silly song. Hum or sing anything. Babies respond to music, and hearing language along with music makes the words more available to them.
- Talk back. When your baby coos and "talks" to you, imitate the sounds back to her. Have a nonsense "conversation." You will begin to see those lovable responses of smiles and laughter.
- Speak to your baby. Tell her about your day. Tell her anything. Tell her how cute she is. Let her hear your voice as much as possible. Don't be afraid to "baby talk." Research has shown that mothers' instinctive high-pitched, long-vowelled talk to their babies actually helps them learn language.



- Play games with your baby. Play peek-a-boo. Play pat-a-cake. Make up your own game. Games are a great way to increase your interaction with your little one.
- Talk on the go. Arrange your trips out of the house to allow for as much interaction with your baby as possible. Adjust her car seat so she can see

your face as you drive. Use a baby stroller that allows her to face you as you take a walk. Seat her in your shopping cart so you can talk to each other.

- Invent your own. What's your unique way of interacting with your baby or young child? How can you increase your face to face time? Record your thoughts here:



The Power of Play

As your little one grows from a baby into a young child, your ways of interacting with him will multiply. As he learns to talk, your conversations will take off in many different directions. One thing, however, will not change. Your child will still love the sound of your voice. This is why most little children will ask and ask and ask us questions until they finally elicit a response. When they ask "why?" to everything we say, it is not so much because they want an answer, but because they love to engage us in the ongoing back and forth. It makes them secure to know Mommy is listening and responding. Of course, this interaction can be exhausting, especially when there are a lot of other things going on. You may not be able to give your child as much one-on-one attention as he wants. Don't feel guilty about it - help him learn to play independently when you need a break, then after you're refreshed you'll be ready for another session of "play-talk."

How can you make more time for play with your child? What do you need to do to rest and refresh yourself so you can enjoy your time together more? Record your thoughts here:

Silly Mommy!

Don't be concerned if your play conversations with your child seem to not have too much content. Many parents are very concerned about their child's education, and want to make every moment a "teaching moment." Research has proven, however, that unstructured play is very important to a small child. Give your child permission to be a child - ridiculous, silly, inventive, even messy!

Take advantage of the time while your child is young to rediscover the power of play for yourself. Children at play are entirely focused on their activity. Their minds are relaxed and creative. A child's language skills develop as he pretends and talks about what he is doing - talking to imaginary friends or real friends. Play is also the way children learn to interact with the world they are in. They may be physical players - building things up and knocking them down, or verbal players - putting words in the mouths of their stuffed animals or puppets. At play, children are in control of what they are doing and create and solve problems on their own.



Find ways to engage yourself in your child's play. Talk to her about what she is doing. Ask her questions. Pretend with her. Don't be afraid to be silly or imaginative. Let yourself think like a child again!

List some creative ideas for ways to interact with your child through play here:

Personal Notes



Give and Take

As your child grows up, the dynamics of family communication will become more complex. You will become a master of negotiation and problem-solving, helping your child learn to navigate the waters of interpersonal relationships. If you have more than one child, you will be interrupted more than you'd like to untangle conflicts between siblings.



During these years, communication between parents and children becomes more complex.

In many ways, we have as much to learn as they do. You will be learning to exercise your authority over your child in a proper way, instructing him and nurturing him without causing him to fear you. This is a fine balance, and mistakes are unavoidable. We teach our children as much by what we are as by what we say. When they see us learning and growing, they learn that human mistakes and challenges can result in positive growth and change.

You may be a parent now for the first time, but in a sense you will always be a child. We have the benefit of knowing from our own experience what it is to be a child learning to communicate. We must take the best from our

childhood experience and apply it to our parenting, and try not to repeat the mistakes our parents made.

What did your parents teach you about communication? What do you hope to pass on, and what do you want to avoid? Record your thoughts here:

As parents, we should learn the communication skills that will allow us to help our children the most. Here are some important ways to keep communication with your child effective and positive:

- Let your child know you are always available for him to talk to, and that you're interested in the things that matter to him.
- When your child comes to you to talk, give him your full attention. Don't try to read or do other things while he is talking to you. This will make him feel valued and will encourage him to open up to you.
- Keep your conversation with your child private, unless other people are specifically involved. Never embarrass your child in front of others.
- Get down to your child's level. Don't stand and loom over him. Sit down together. This will increase his trust and openness with you.
- Don't try to talk to your child if you are angry. If you are upset over an incident, take time to cool off before you discuss it with him.
- Listen to your child carefully and thoroughly. Don't interrupt him or cut him off when he is trying to tell his story.
- Don't jump to conclusions. Suspend your judgment about the situation until you have a clear picture.
- Don't ask *why*, but do ask *what* happened.
- Give your child a full account of what you know about the situation. Don't spring things on him. Be forthright and clear.
- Keep preaching and moralizing to a minimum. This kind of speaking only intimidates the child and frustrates the openness of the conversation.
- Don't use put-down words or statements like "dumb," "stupid," or "lazy."
- If possible, help your child plan a specific solution to the problem.
- Let your child know that you accept him, regardless of what he has or has not done.
- Reinforce your child for keeping communication open. Praise all his efforts to communicate.

Mutual Space

In a family, just as we share the same physical space, we also share one another's psychological and emotional space. We are always moving in and out of each others' individual realm, pausing to interact, share and care for one another. The same territory in which we show mutual care and respect for one another can also become



the ground for conflict. In a healthy family environment, these conflicts will lead to giving and taking, working things out, sorting through feelings, and ultimately resolving the problem through respect for one another. We all need space. You as a mom need space. Your children each need space. You and your husband need private space. A big part of the way we take care of each other is in the way we leave each other alone - realizing our

individual differences and needs, but celebrating our love for one another.

How is your family's "space barometer?" Are you able to yield to one another? Is there a particular problem area that needs special attention? Don't be afraid to get all the help you can. When things become especially hard, extended family and community resources can be essential to helping get our family "balance" back.

Take a few moments to make some notes about the health of your family's communication. What is working well? What needs strengthening?

Family Communication Checklist

How do you rate as a communicator in your family? Use this checklist to assess your strengths and weaknesses. Have each family member rate themselves, and then fold your paper to rate one another. Be positive and encouraging with one another - children learn from your modeling that talking openly with one another can be constructive and not threatening.

My opinion	My family's opinion	Ask yourself if each of these statements applies to you. Mark each statement with T for true and F for false.
		I clearly say what I mean.
		I let other people finish talking before I speak.
		I express my thoughts and opinions clearly and straightforwardly.
		I rarely get angry or hostile when someone disagrees with me.
		I listen well to others' ideas and feelings.
		I rarely use sarcasm or insults.
		I am a sensitive and attentive listener.
		When I don't understand something, I ask questions.
		When giving my opinion, I use statements like "I think," and "it seems to me."
		I am sensitive to nonverbal communication, like tone of voice and body language.

Personal Notes:



Moving On

Whether we like it or not, our children are moving on and out. Their growth inevitably takes them out of our house more and more, and into their own new world. As they grow through their school years, their time away from us will increase, as will the variety and number of other people they communicate with. Our role with them will change and evolve, but



they'll still need us in a very fundamental way. The way you handle your relationship with your child in these growing years will shape your future relationship with him. Every day, every hour counts. No conversation is so small that it doesn't matter.

As your child learns about her world, she will want to talk to you about it. She will naturally want to ask and listen, and then ask and listen more as she formulates her unique ideas. She wants to know what you think, although she may not want you to know how much she

cares. If she challenges you and questions you, don't take it personally. It is her way of testing her developing logic and understanding against that of the person she loves the most. Let her know you take her seriously and appreciate her point of view. Here are some other key ingredients of good communication to remember:

- **Make time to talk.** Your opportunities to talk with your school-aged child will be more limited. Make full use of the time you do have, for example, in the car on the way home from school or other activities. Try to budget some private time for you and your child to talk, even if it seems there aren't any big issues to discuss.
- **Don't talk down to your child.** Respect your child by speaking in a mature way. Even if he is behaving immaturely, he doesn't want to be treated "like a baby." You are more likely to gain his cooperation if you avoid arousing his anger.
- **Ask specific questions.** Show your child that you are interested in her and her activities by asking for specific information. Rather than asking, "How was your day?" ask something more specific, such as "How did your art project turn out?"
- **Ask for clarification.** If your child begins to talk about something that arouses your concern, don't jump to conclusions. Make sure you understand what she is saying. Before you react, repeat back to her what you think she said. An atmosphere of calm will make difficult subjects much easier to discuss.
- **Be willing to laugh at yourself.** Don't expect your child to think you are perfect. No one is. If you make a mistake and realize the conversation is going badly, don't be too proud to apologize. This will help your child see you as a human being, and will help him admit his own imperfections.
- **Engage your child in establishing boundaries.** From time to time, you will need to tell your child "No." When you do, try to involve him. Ask for his input about the limits and boundaries he needs. For example, ask him "When do you think you



should start your homework? Would it be better to get it done early?"

- **Keep talking.** If your child doesn't want to talk to you, don't give up. Keep the lines of communication open. Don't be offended by his silence. He may just need a little private time to cool off.

The Family Table

Do you..... have a family dinner time? When you were growing up, did your family eat dinner together? If you did, you probably remember it as the regular time when your family could share the day's news, ask each other questions, and iron out differences. Do you remember lingering together after the plates were cleared, laughing at each others' jokes?

The family dinner table is a tradition worth re-discovering in this age of non-stop activity. If dinner time isn't a regular part of your daily family life, it can be very difficult to get everyone together at the same time. Try to bring your family



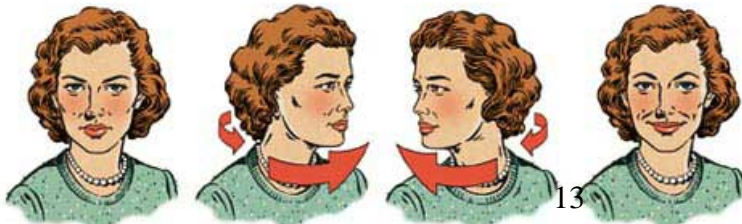
back to the table. Spend some time together. Tell each other what's going on. Share lessons and stories. You'll enjoy the togetherness at least as much as the food! Here are some ways to make the most of the family dinner hour:

- **Keep the phones off.** This includes cell phones and text messaging. This is family time. No outside interruptions allowed!
- **Wait for each other.** Don't start eating until everyone gets to the table. This is a great way to show respect for one another. If you have dawdlers in your family, do what you can to get them to the table on time.
- **Give thanks.** This is your best opportunity to give thanks together - for each other, to each other, and for the blessings you enjoy. Openly showing your appreciation will help your children become gracious people.

- **Take turns.** Encourage your children to talk, but don't let them talk excessively. If one child has trouble expressing himself, care for him by encouraging him to speak and not interrupting him. Teach your children to wait for their turn to speak.
- **Be orderly.** There's nothing old-fashioned about good table manners. You'll give your child a gift for life if you teach him to pass serving dishes in an orderly way and eat together properly.
- **Don't eat and run.** As much as you can, maintain a relaxed pace and don't allow your children to eat fast and rush off to the TV or computer. Even if homework needs to be done, your child will be able to work better if eats slowly and calmly. Don't allow your children to eat meals in their own rooms unless they are sick.
- **Share the work.** Involve your children in meal-time chores. Let them clear the table and wash the dishes. If they are old enough, let them cook you dinner occasionally!

Do you have a family dinner time now? If not, what would it take to bring your family back to the table? If you do have dinner together, what aspects need improvement? Record your thoughts here:

The Positive Power of "No"



How hard is it for you to say "No?" Do you have trouble refusing any of your family's requests?

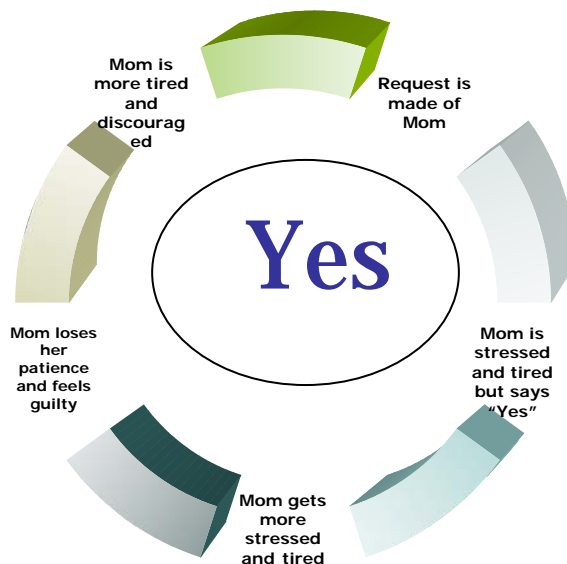
Do you hold your breath when you know your child is about to ask you to do one more thing or take him one more place? Do you always try to squeeze out that last little bit of energy to satisfy each and every one of your family's demands? Can you even remember the last time you said "no" to any of them? Do you always sacrifice your personal plans if someone in your family wants you to do something else? Believe it or not, this is really a Mom's biggest problem. No matter how much we try to fool ourselves, our habitual heroic sacrifice of ourselves and our personal needs almost always backfires. We wind up cranky and stressed out, not to mention tired, when we're overextended. And for Mom, that's a critical mass for losing our cool with the same family members we've been sacrificing for. We have to learn to spare ourselves so we can spare them and be the Mom they really want us to be.

If you are a chronic "yes-sayer," saying "no" may seem like speaking a foreign language. It may not come out easily at first. Think about how many times you said "yes" during the past week. What would have gone differently if you had said "no" to some of those requests? Would you have felt less stressed, resentful or pressed for time?

In order to know when to say "No," we must be aware of our limits. We really can't do everything. Be clear with your family that taking care of your self is a priority. You won't be able to do everything they ask for. Find creative ways of stalling, if you need to, to become clear before you add something more to your load.

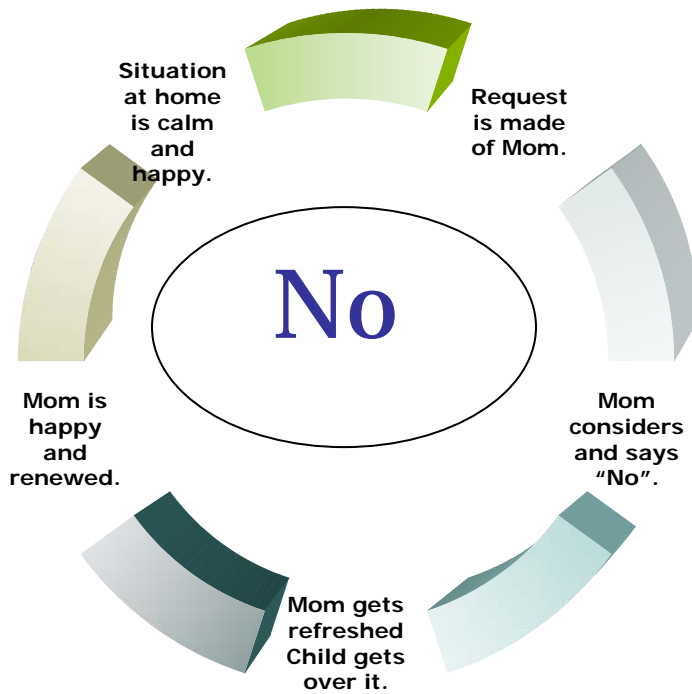
Here are two cycles with two outcomes. In the first, Mom knows better, but says "Yes" anyway. In the second diagram, Mom listens to her intuition, and the result is good for everyone.

Does this picture describe you? Do you feel like you're in a viscous cycle? It's up to you to make the change. Your family will not initiate this for you. If you communicate with them about your need for a change, you may find them surprisingly cooperative. Talk with them when you're calm and rested.



Don't be surprised if you meet

a little resistance when you put your "No" strategy to use the first time. Your loved ones may be momentarily surprised! Be firm and remind them that you're saying "No" now so you'll be able to say "Yes" later!



Personal Notes:



About Mia Redrick



“My mother said to me when I had my son that being a mother is what you do – not who you are. ” – Mia Redrick

Mia Redrick is the President and Founder of Finding Definitions, LLC. Finding Definitions, LLC, helps busy moms balance the rigors of parenting while providing the essential tools for a mother’s self-care.

The company offers popular individual/ group coaching services, teleclasses and seminars on topics relevant for a mother’s own personal growth on her journey throughout motherhood. Mia is the author of *Time for Mom-me, 5 Essential Self-Care Strategies for a Mother’s Self-Care*. Her

book is the mother’s handbook on the best solutions for finding personal time, growth, strategies and personal connections.

Redrick is a sought-after speaker by women’s, businesses and parenting groups around the country, and hundreds of women have attended her workshops.

Redrick writes a parenting column for Family Digest, a monthly magazine with circulation of 3 million and contributes parental traveling tips to the Home Away Traveler International Newsletter, which reaches 95,000 homeowners around the world.

She has been published in the magazines, Parenting and Attractions, and was interviewed for Sky Radio’s “Conversation for the Expert Segment,” which airs in more than 29, 000 North Western American Airlines Flights.

Redrick started professional life as a trainer for Citicorp Corporation. She served an international internship coordinator for the University of Maryland, Baltimore County before becoming a professional sales representative for Premier School Agenda (a Franklin Covey Company) in 1995. Redrick taught thousands of educators the skills for time management and life organization.

Redrick graduated from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics. She is a member of the International Coach Federation, Sergeant of Arms in Toastmasters International and has been featured in The Washington Post, CNN.com The PG Gazette and seen in Parenting Magazine.

Mia and her husband Patrick of 12 years have three children and live with a dog named Basil and Cat named Tycoona. Mia is an author, columnist for Family Digest Magazine, certified personal coach and strategist. She speaks throughout the country on topics of concern to women who are mothers. She makes her home in Maryland.

Be sure to check out all the useful resources here at www.findingdefinitions.com

Finding Definitions is an educational service provided by Mia Redrick - The Mom Coach Strategist.
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The Next Step for you

Don't forget to sign up for my "Time for Mom" newsletter to learn and laugh about the latest strategies and solutions for moms. Each month we offer **FREE** gifts, great information to help your navigation through mothering easier.

To sign up for the newsletter visit www.findingdefinitions.com and click on the newsletter link.

Finding Definitions is the premiere resource for all things moms. There are plenty of other resources available to you as well so just click on the store to unlock unlimited possibilities.

Thank you for making time for you.

Live Fully,
Mia

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