



Accept—don't reject

Greetings from the Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa

**ADHASA**

Helping the community for nearly 19 years!

This article targets people with ADHD and the information could help other people too.

Please make this newsletter available to anyone who could use it.

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**Volunteers Needed to counsel and help children and adults who are battling with their ADD/ADHD.**

Phone Sandy on (011) 793-2079 when you can help.

# Keeping up with ADD

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**Communicate Clearly with your Teen** by *Christine McGogy*



**1. Focus, and Give your teen your full attention.**

I know that this is a toughie, because we tend to be so busy. It seems like we are always multi-tasking. However, it is important in clear communicating that you make a point of stopping what you are doing and really listen to your teen (rather than just hearing them). When you give your teen your undivided attention they will know that you care, because you took the time to listen, and it will increase the chances that they will listen to you.

How would you like to have a closer relationship with your teen again? Your ability to communicate effectively with your teen is one of the most precious skills you can develop to achieve this goal.

When we think of communication, we tend to think only of the way we can express ourselves. This is certainly important, but listening is the single most crucial of all communication skills.

As a mother of two teenage boys I know that it isn't always easy to communicate well with your teen. It's particularly frustrating when they aren't talking to you. However, when I started applying these techniques to our lives, I found that we started getting along better almost immediately. There was less arguing between us, and our relationship became stronger.



**2. Get the Details - Hear what your teen is really saying!**

Teens tend to give terse answers to questions, leaving out details that may be important. It's up to you to be able to get them to open up and draw them into a conversation. Here is an example: .....



This edition of "Keeping up with ADD" kindly put together for us by Lori Lea; Executive, Life, Family & ADD Coach 082-787-0262 ~ [www.MindFocus.co.za](http://www.MindFocus.co.za)

Teen: "I hate my teacher!"  
 Parent: "Oh, you don't really mean that!"  
 Teen: "Yes, I do, I double hate him!"  
 Parent: "Well, I don't want to hear that kind of talk. I am sure you don't really hate him!"  
 Teen: "Yes, I do so, I hate all teachers!"  
 Parent: "Do you think hating your teachers is going to get you a good mark?"

And on and on the arguing goes....Here's an alternative:

Teen: "I hate my teacher!"  
 Parent: "Wow, you don't normally hate anybody. What did he do to get you talking like that?"  
 Teen: "A couple of kids didn't have their homework finished again today, so he decided to punish all of us by giving us a math test tomorrow!"  
 Parent: "That doesn't sound very fair!"  
 Teen: "No, it isn't fair at all. I wanted to go over to Rachel's tonight to hang out and listen to music. Instead I have to study for that stupid test. I am so mad at my teacher! He ruins everything!"  
 Parent: just listening.....



This teen was able to express herself and felt validated by her parent. You will notice that the parent didn't argue about the feelings the teen had. You don't have to agree with your teen's feelings; just acknowledge them. There is no such thing as a wrong feeling. We can't help what our teens may feel, however, we should set limits on behaviours that don't satisfy what we consider appropriate behaviour. Expressing one's feelings is a healthy thing; although negative expressions of one's feelings should be avoided; like screaming or name calling.

A good way to avoid this is using

'time outs' - wait and continue the conversation when everybody has calmed down.



3. Open-Ended Questions

Questions can be crucial to communicating with your teen. Ask them questions that they can't just answer with a "yes" or a "no". For example in the above scenario the parent could ask the teen,

"What could you do to help your teacher change his mind about the test?"  
 Teen: "I am not sure - this guy is so stubborn!"  
 Parent: "If you talked to him and came up with better ways for him to deal with the kids that aren't doing their homework?"  
 Teen: "Mmhhh, maybe I could give it a try....?"

4. Criticize Behaviours, Not Your Teen

Now, let's move from the listening to the talking part of communication.

When you want to see a change in your teen's behaviour, use the "when you...I feel...because...I need ..." sentence. Using this wording (known as "I" message) doesn't attack your teen's personality; it merely talks about their action and that you'd like it changed and why.

Here is a scenario you might relate to: The chores haven't been done and your teen went out instead. This example shows not the best way of communicating by attacking them as a person and making statements you may not stick to anyways.

Parent: "You didn't do your chores! You are such a lazy slob! You never do your chores and I always have to do them for you. Next time you don't do them I am going to ground you for a week!"  
 Teen: feeling pretty lousy...

Now here is an example with using the: when you...I feel...because...I need – technique:

Parent: "When you didn't do your chores before going out, I felt really mad."

We had an agreement about chores being done before going out and I need you to do your part of the chores or I am stuck doing them for you."

Teen: thinking – "I guess that makes sense."Remember when you start a sentence with "You are such and such..." , you aren't communicating. You are criticizing!

5. Let the Consequence Fit the Action



A fairly big problem that parents run into is looking for suitable punishment for broken rules. However, the penalty applied usually isn't related to the teen's action. As parents, we need to show our teens that each choice they make has consequences.

Parents tend to punish their teens by taking away something the adolescent enjoys; for example, no TV for a week. Take the above example of the unwashed laundry. It would be more beneficial to the development of your teen if you base the penalty on a natural connection between his action and the punishment. A good way of showing the consequences to his action in this instance would be having your teen do your chores as well as his next time, since you had to do his this time. When following this step you are practicing "silent communication" with your teen.

Letting your teen experience the natural consequence of his actions speaks louder than any words ever would! It illustrates to them that they will be held accountable for what they do. As they grow teens tend to get more privileges from parents. It is important for them to realize that with the extra freedom there is more responsibility that goes along with it.

#### 6. Using Descriptive Praise - We all praise our teen sometimes.

We tell them "You are a smart kid" or "You are a good piano player" etc. We mean well, but unfortunately this kind of praise doesn't get the desired effect of making your teen feel good about himself. Why is that? It is because what we are doing is evaluating their actions. With this type of praise, we aren't giving evidence to support our claims, and this makes the praise fall flat, and seem empty and unconvincing. We need to describe in detail what they are doing and as your teen recognizes the truth in your words they can then evaluate his actions and credit themselves.

Here is an example (evaluating praise):

Teen: "Hey Ma, I got a 90 on my geometry test!"  
 Parent: "Fantastic! You are a genius!"  
 Teen: thinking - "I wish. I only got it 'cause Paul helped me study. He is the genius."

Descriptive praise:



Teen: "Hey Ma, I got a 90 on my geometry test!"  
 Parent: "You must be so pleased. You did a lot of studying for that test!"

Teen: thinking - "I can really do geometry when I work at it!"

Describing your teen's action rather than evaluating them with an easy "good" or "great" or labelling like "slow learner" or "scatterbrain" isn't easy to do at first, because we are all unaccustomed to doing it. However, once you get into the habit of looking carefully at your teen's action and putting it into words what you see, you will do it more and more easily and with growing pleasure.

Adolescents need the kind of emotional nourishment that will help them become independent, creative thinkers and doers, so they aren't looking to others for approval all the time. With this sort of praise, teens will trust themselves and they won't need everybody else's opinion to tell them how they are doing. Another challenging problem is when and how we criticize our teens. Instead of pointing out what's wrong with your teen's actions, try describing what is right and then what still needs doing. Example: Teen hasn't done his laundry yet.

Parent: "How is the laundry coming?"  
 Teen: "I am working on it."  
 Parent: "I see that you picked up your clothes in your room and in the family room and put it in the hamper. You are half way there."



This parent talks with encouragement, acknowledging what has been done so far rather than pointing out what hasn't been done yet.

Parents need to fill a child's bucket of self-esteem so high that the rest of the world can't poke enough holes in it to drain it dry." - Alvin Pric.

#### JOHANNESBURG FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**26 July:** ADHASA Adult ADD Seminar "Adding to Success" (Johannesburg) at The Wits Club, at Wits University, off Yale Road, Johannesburg. 08h00 to 16h30 and the cost will be R350. CPD Points are being applied for.

**13 & 14 September:** ADHASA's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (Jhb) – this is a two day event with various speakers and the venue is still to be confirmed

**3, 4 & 5 October:** ADHASA is manning a table at the Sandton Convention Centre as part of the Baba indaba. We will also be giving two 15 minutes talks per day at this event at the 'Speakers' Corner' on ADHD.

**25 October:** Jane Jarvis talk "Studying for tests" at Sportron Building, Cnr Bryanston Drive & Eaton Road, Bryanston. Suggested donation R40 for ADHASA members and R50 for visitors.

**Booking is essential for all these events.**

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