

**IMPORTANCE OF
COMMUNICATION**

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

THEME This workshop addresses the issue of family communication, and why communication is very important for helping children make the most of their education.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Prior to conducting this workshop, the facilitator should:

- ✓ Read:
 - Facilitator's Manual
 - Reading Materials provided for this workshop
- ✓ Gather:
 - Flipchart
 - Magic markers
 - Chairs
 - Tape
- ✓ Do:
 - Set chairs in a circle

WORKSHOP TIMELINE

ACTIVITY A:	Introductions	15 minutes
ACTIVITY B:	Icebreaker Exercise: "The Truth about Communication"	15 minutes
ACTIVITY C:	Case Study and Role Playing Exercise: "La Familia Sánchez"	60 minutes
ACTIVITY D:	Wrap-up	<u>15 minutes</u>
Total Time		105 minutes (1 hour, 45 minutes)

ACTIVITY A INTRODUCTIONS

TIME LIMIT ⌚ 15 minutes

- OBJECTIVES**
- To welcome the group back and introduce new members to the group
 - To answer any questions not answered during the last workshop
 - To provide an overview of the workshop and how it will be conducted

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS


1. Welcome everyone back who attended the last workshop. Welcome new members to the group and have them say something about themselves if they feel comfortable doing so. Then, have group members briefly introduce themselves to the new parents.
2. Briefly go over what was discussed at the last workshop. You may want to ask the group members who attended the last workshop to assist you in explaining what they learned.
3. Announce that new group members should get in touch with a person who attended the last workshop in order to get a copy of the reading material provided.
4. Provide a two minute overview of the workshop and how it will be conducted. Your overview may contain the following:

"The purpose of today's workshop is to examine issues of family communication and why communication is so important in helping children make the most of their education. To help us examine these issues, we will be doing two exercises--an 'icebreaker exercise', and a 'case study and role playing exercise'."

ACTIVITY B ICEBREAKER: "THE TRUTH ABOUT COMMUNICATION"

TIME LIMIT  15 minutes

OBJECTIVES ■ To emphasize that communication has many dimensions

PREPARATION  Prior to the beginning of the workshop, write down some "true and false" statements about communication on the flipchart (see paragraph #2 below for suggestions)


FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS


1. Have a group member explain the purpose of an **icebreaker exercise**. This will reinforce their learning. Once the person is finished, you may want to fill in anything that was left out.
2. Display the list of "true and false" statements about communication you wrote down on the flipchart. Some ideas are:
 - *"Teenagers are easy to communicate with."*
 - *"Parents always know what is best for the child."*
 - *"Teachers are the most important influence on how a child behaves."*
 - *"Parents should always punish a child when he does something wrong."*
 - *"Discussing things together is the best way for a parent and child to solve problems."*
3. Ask group members to decide whether each statement is either true or false and encourage them to explain why. The group should have fun with these statements!

ACTIVITY C CASE STUDY AND ROLE PLAYING: "LA FAMILIA SÁNCHEZ"

TIME LIMIT  60 minutes

- OBJECTIVES:**
- To observe how group members communicate with their children through **role-playing**
 - To reinforce the importance of communication

PREPARATION  Make sufficient copies of the Reading Materials for this workshop entitled "How Do I Talk to My Child?", and "How Can I Help Him?" to hand out to group members at the end of the workshop

 Prepare the charts in paragraph #4 titled "Communication Skills" on the flipchart before the workshop begins

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS

1. Advise the group that this will be a **case study** followed by a **role-playing exercise**.

Advise them that a **case study** looks at a particular problem or related problems in a story which group members are asked to analyze or resolve. The story can be real-life or fictional.

In a **role playing exercise**, the facilitator or one of the group members tells a short story describing a specific situation. The facilitator assigns the roles of the two or three people involved to group members, giving them a clear role and objective(s). The rest of the group acts as observers.

2. Tell a short story as a **case study** to the group to set the stage for the **role-playing**. The story should be told, not read, and contain the following information:

María Sánchez was divorced two years ago, and is barely getting by. She is in her kitchen preparing dinner, and her three young children are fighting again. After an eight-hour day at the store, she's wondering how she can get through it all.

Then Juan, her 16-year-old, comes home to tell her that he's decided to drop out of school and get a job. She says he's crazy. He says he's a man now. He thinks to himself, 'Why doesn't she understand that I am a man now, and that I'm doing this to help out the family?'

While he is thinking this, Maria is thinking, 'There are so many things he doesn't understand. He thinks he's so grown up.'

He now wants to go out with his friends, and her rice is about to burn. He goes out and she continues to cook. She is thinking about when she can speak with Juan and what she will say to him.

3. Now that the group has become familiar with the problems of María and Juan, have two group members volunteer to play the roles of María and Juan. They will be in the middle of the circle and have a five-minute conversation on this topic.
4. After the **role-playing exercise**, display the two charts you prepared before the meeting on "Communication Skills."

CHART #1

Communication Skills

María	
Effective	Not effective
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

CHART #2

Juan	
Effective	Not effective
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

5. Ask the group to identify if Maria communicated effectively or non-effectively with Juan and why. List the group's reasons on the flipchart (tape the pages of the flipchart with their comments on the wall so everyone can see them throughout the exercise).

Now ask if Juan communicated effectively or non-effectively with his mother and why. List the group's reasons on the flipchart (tape this page on the wall too).

6. Ask the group to suggest ways in which Juan and his mother, María, could more effectively communicate their concerns and find an solution to their problems. List their suggestions on a new page of your flipchart.
7. Discuss the importance of communication between parent and child. Refer to the Reading Materials for this workshop entitled "How Can I Help Him?" and go over each point.

ACTIVITY D WRAP-UP

TIME LIMIT  15 minutes

- OBJECTIVES**
- To summarize lessons learned
 - To invite members to participate in all workshops
 - To announce/schedule the next workshop
 - To obtain feedback

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS

1. Have a group member explain what a "wrap-up" is meant to accomplish. Once the group member is finished, you may want to fill in anything that was left out.
2. Summarize accomplishments of the workshop. Ask the group what they learned. Be sure to include:
 - *The case study and role-playing exercises*
 - *The importance of communication and the basic communication skills needed to communicate with your child, parent groups, and school personnel.*
3. Invite the group to participate in all workshops. Announce that the next workshop will focus on - **"Improving the Home Study Environment for your Child."**
4. Announce (or collectively schedule) the next workshop date, time and place. Be sure to advise group members of the method by which everyone will be contacted to confirm their attendance.
5. Provide members with copies of the Reading Materials for this workshop entitled "How Do I Talk to My Child?" and "How Can I Help Him?"

READING MATERIAL FOR WORKSHOP SIX**How Do I Talk With My Child?**

The first step in helping a child become a responsible adult is to start talking with him. This is often not too easy, especially when he's a teenager and sometimes does things that make you angry or worried.

It's a hard time for a parent. However, it's also a hard time for a teenager. They are changing from being children to becoming adults. It is a difficult change. Your teenager is facing new decisions. Before, mamá or papá made the decisions for them. Now, their schoolmates, workmates, and friends are insisting they make their own decisions. Whether or not to stay in school, buy a car, drink, smoke, have a girlfriend/boyfriend--all of these are important decisions for them.

Young people can learn to make good, responsible decisions with the help of someone who has more experience. Guided by you, as his parent, your teenager can make better decisions.

This can only work, though, if there is good communication between you and your child. This reading material gives you several ideas about how to talk better with your child, and how to get him to talk better with you.

Adolescence is a time for your teenager to look at the world around him with new eyes. He sees different things than his parents see. He does not understand his parents, and he gets frustrated when his parents don't understand him. If your family has come to the mainland United States recently, this lack of understanding between parents and children can be even more severe. Your memories of what it was like growing up in another place may not seem to fit into your children's world.

While your teenager wants to be unique and independent, he is also uncertain about what path to take. Looking for his own identity, he sometimes tries very hard to be different from his parents' generation. A teenager creates new ways to dress, to speak, and to act. He has new ideas. For a Latino teenager, this identity crisis is doubled--as a young person he needs to find his own unique identity; as a Latino in this society he needs to have a sense of his own culture and feel part of the group. Confronting a clash of both generations and cultures, he has to struggle to shape his own identity.

In addition, for many Latino families, the difficulties of day to day survival put more pressure on everyone, including your teenager. Perhaps because of your work schedule you cannot spend as much time with your child as you would like, or be as involved in his schoolwork. Perhaps your teenager needs to work to help support the family, or you rely on him to help with family chores and childcare. Sometimes, in the middle of daily crises, finding time to talk with your teenager about his concerns isn't very easy.

Even if he/she seems like an adult or does not want your advice, your teenager still needs you to help them understand and make decisions about their confusing--and sometimes threatening--world.

READING MATERIAL FOR WORKSHOP SIX

How Can I Help Him?

There are two important skills which you need in order to communicate better with your child. The first is listening so your child can speak with you. The second is speaking so your child will listen. Many times, conversations between parents and children sound too much like this:

Parent: "Why don't you do what you're supposed to do? You never listen to what I tell you!"

Teenager: "You're always yelling at me! You don't understand me at all!"

Even if you are very busy, try to set aside five or ten minutes a day for a quiet conversation with each of your children. In these open conversations, you and your child should be able to express different points of view. You should both speak and listen. Below are some ideas to help your communication.

BE INTERESTED.

Show your child you care about what he is saying by setting aside what you were doing when he begins to talk with you. Listen to his words. Also pay attention to what he doesn't say. If he tells you he's fine but his face is sad or scared, you know he's trying to tell you something else.

LET YOUR CHILD SPEAK.

Smile at him to show you understand or agree when he pauses. Keep your questions short, open, and friendly, but don't ask "why." Many times teenagers aren't sure why they feel or do things. If you repeat the important ideas of what he is telling you, he will know that you are really listening.

DON'T TALK TOO MUCH.

The best moment to stop speaking is before he stops listening. If you feel you need to say something, say it. Then ask for his opinion. This helps him to understand exactly what you are talking about, and shows you value his ideas.

TRY TO SYMPATHIZE.

It's hard to sympathize with a teenager, but try to accept his feelings. If you understand his feelings, you will understand better his actions. Accept the fact that teenagers will always complain. Let him get out all his complaints without interrupting him or changing the subject.

LISTEN AND SPEAK WITH RESPECT.

Speak to your child like you speak to your adult friends. Don't try to dominate the conversation.

SHOW YOUR FEELINGS.

Let your child know that you are a human being who can feel hurt, uncertain, or scared. When he does something that makes you mad, don't tell him he is lazy, or irresponsible, or bad. Tell him, "It makes me angry when you do that." Let him see that his actions have consequences for you.

Once you and your child are speaking more openly to each other, you can start helping him to make responsible decisions for himself. A teenager needs to have the opportunity to practice making decisions. If you make all the decisions for your child, or protect him so much that he never has to face difficult choices, then he never learns how to become an adult.

Parents can work with their children, sharing with them ways to make better decisions. Below are some suggestions for discussing decision-making with your teenager.

BELIEVE HE HAS DECISIONS TO MAKE.

A teenager, especially today, has to make decisions all the time that can affect his life. You need to accept that this is true before you start talking with him.

Let's get back to the situation of Juan, who says he wants to drop out of school. Let's look at how you as a parent would help him think through his decision.

MAKE SURE THE SITUATION IS CLEAR.

Practice your new skill of speaking clearly to make sure that both you and your child are talking about the same thing. Also make sure that you and he have the real facts of the situation.

What about Juan wanting to drop out to earn money? Does Juan know that having a high school diploma pays off? These days, a high school graduate earns in his lifetime up to \$250,000 more than a high school dropout.

LOOK FOR ALTERNATIVES.

Together, make a list of all the possible ways to solve the problem. Write down all the possible choices that either of you think of, even if they seem impossible or silly. Later on you can cross off some of them.

Could he get an after-school job? Could he go to summer school and graduate early? Could he take the GED exam? Could he hold off earning money until later?

LOOK AT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.

Next to each alternative, write down all the good and bad points it would have. Again, each of you should make sure to write down even consequences that seem silly or wrong to the other person. After school job: Good points--money, work experience; Bad points--less time for friends, homework.

DISCUSS FEELINGS, BELIEFS, AND MORALS.

After you look at the good and bad points of a possible decision, help your child to think about moral values and beliefs, and to be honest with himself about his feelings.

Does he want to be a high school dropout? Will it bother him if people think he's stupid? Is it that important to have money now?

DISCUSS WHAT SOCIETY THINKS IS ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR.

What a teenager and his friends think is the right way to act may not be what society thinks is correct. Discuss with him what the larger society will think of his decision.

What do people in general think of dropouts? Do they get respect or good-paying jobs?

CHOOSE THE BEST SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

After you have discussed all the facts, the alternatives, and the consequences of each alternative, you are ready to make a decision together and follow through with it.

If Juan decides to stay in school for now, but still wants to earn money, you could agree to go together to meet the work-study program director, or to keep an eye open for part-time jobs.

It may be that even after you have talked over all the consequences with him, Juan still decides to drop out of school. It's important for you not to feel discouraged or give up. Keep talking and listening to him--he still has some choices. With your help, he may realize later that getting his high school diploma is important. He may not go back to school, but he could get his diploma through a GED program. Or, he could attend a job training program. Remember, keep the lines of communication open.

Perhaps hardest of all, try to respect your child's decisions. He may not always do what you would do in his situation. However, showing respect and keeping the lines of communication open lets your child take some steps towards adulthood while knowing that he can always come back to you for help in making better and better decisions.