

Friday Night Open Meetings

Speaking to Your Child Over the Microphone

How did you feel a few days (or weeks) before deciding to come to the program?

How do you feel now that you are here? That your child is here?

When talking to your child, it is especially important that you express your feelings. This communicates when nothing else does. It is usually not profitable to preach, direct or instruct your child over the microphone.

We are not accustomed to expressing our feelings. It is too revealing. Mostly, we talk about the facts and opinions. We tell stories. They can't deny us our feelings. This is the beginning of real communication.

BE STRONG. This can be evidenced by your positive commitment to the program and the rightness of your decision to enter the program. We don't see tears as an evidence of weakness. But "I miss you" can be taken for weakness. "I miss the person you used to be" might be a better approach.

HONESTY. Encourage your child to be honest by being honest with your feelings. Give one or more situations which brought on these feelings. *Honesty & Feelings* are the basis of your future relationship with your child.

HOW I HAVE FELT AND MAY STILL FEEL:

(Bad)		
mad	angry	anxious
hurt	disappointed	resentful
bitter	embarrassed	depressed
abused	beaten	bushed
tired	humiliated	threatened
confused	defeated	tense
enraged	immobilized	grief-stricken
impatient	weepy	dependent
unloved	powerless	

HOW I AM BEGINNING OR WOULD LIKE TO FEEL:

(Good)		
assured	relieved	hopeful
calm	relaxed	peaceful
rested	cooperative	tolerant
quiet	grateful	comforted
compassionate	happy	firm
confident	strong	determined
in control	stable	serene
content	encouraged	accomplished
jubilant	proud	excited
loved		

Remember to use "I" messages.

If you must say "you" -- try saying "When you _____, I feel _____."

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR TALKING ON THE MICROPHONE

1. Set aside some time to think about the specific reasons you brought your child to Growing Together.
 - Make a list of things that happened that showed you that your child had a problem that required professional help. Include in this list the difficulties between you and your child.
 - Try to look at how the child's problems was impacting the family as a whole.
2. Select an incident (from your list above) to talk to your child about.
 - Try to choose an incident that concerns something your child did that was harmful to himself or others. (Both group and staff (and parents taking him/her home!) need to know what he was doing before he entered the program. He may not choose to tell the exact truth early in his program.)

When you talk on the microphone, give a brief detailed description of the facts of the incident.

- People often feel insecure being too specific and are uncomfortable telling painful or embarrassing details.
- It is a part of the treatment process to openly discuss these details in front of the other parents and the group. Healing is often painful, but the treatment is to save your child's life.
- Time constraints require that you keep it brief, but try to make your recital of facts complete.
- Other parents can reach out to you and help you when you are brave enough to be vulnerable because the chances are very great that one (or more) in the room have experienced the same thing, or something very similar.

4. Spend time before Friday night meeting and think about how you **felt** about what happened (use the feelings chart).

- Also think about how you feel about it now. Notice if you find that at the time you felt angry or hurt or frightened, and those feelings seem less intense now. (Be aware of the possibility that you are missing your child and the longing to be with him is causing you to minimize his past behavior).
- Particularly notice if you have a problem identifying **any** feelings about the situation. You may need to work really hard to identify feelings, but it is very important that you do.
- Your child is being encouraged to get in touch with his feelings. It is a source of bonding between the two of you when he realized that you are doing the same.
- Do not be afraid to share negative feelings with your child. While you are getting in touch with your anger or hurt, he will be getting in touch with his guilt. It is a **good** thing for teens to learn to feel sorry when they hurt others. Sometimes we have to be a little vulnerable to give them an opportunity to learn compassion.
- There are two feelings which need to be explained in order to be understood:
 - ✓ If you share anger, also tell why you were angry -- what feeling was underneath the anger.
 - ✓ If you were disappointed, tell what caused the disappointment -- what expectation was not met.

5. Share with your child what you are learning at Growing Together.

- Children (even rebellious ones) often copy what their parents do. By demonstrating that you are participating in the program, you may encourage your child to do so as well. (Perhaps he will not participate right away, but over time, he may follow your example).

6. Tell what changes you plan to make so that situations will be handled differently in the future. Some examples could be:

- You will no longer protect the child from the consequences of his actions.
- You will set boundaries that keep him or others from mistreating you.
- You will acknowledge your feelings and handle them more productively.
- You will no longer tolerate unacceptable behavior.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare to talk on the microphone:

- Try to avoid the phrase "I love you, but"
 - ✓ Say "I love you, and ..." and then add whatever you need to. For example, "I love you, and I am learning new skills to be a better parent." Or "I love you, and I have learned that it doesn't help either of us for me to tolerate your unacceptable behavior in our home."
- Don't be afraid that your child will hate you.
 - ✓ Instead, keep in mind the saying -- "I love you enough to let you have me for a while."
 - ✓ Anger and expressions of dislike are often learned manipulations for getting his own way.
 - ✓ Your child knows that you love him, and children want nothing more than to love their parents. **Anger is not hate.**
- Don't make excuses for your child's behavior.
 - ✓ Let him take responsibility for the things he has done wrong.
 - ✓ Don't rescue him and make it all right for him to behave badly.
 - ✓ He will feel better about himself when he admits his wrongs and makes amends for them.
- Seek advice from staff whenever you are not sure about bringing up an issue on the microphone.
- Don't give your child a "back door" that will slow his progress in the program.
 - ✓ "Back doors" are those things that will cause your child to think that if he waits long enough, misbehaves badly enough, or gets upset or depressed enough that you will take pity on him and take him out of the program.
 - ✓ Parents often unwittingly plant the idea in a child's mind that they are not supportive of the program.
- It is against the rules to talk about anyone who is not physically present.
 - ✓ That means that if a member of the family is not in attendance, parents cannot deliver a message that Mom is out of town on business, or that Sister is sick at home.
 - ✓ Certainly, no mention of anyone outside the program is allowed, and it is never acceptable to mention the child's friends or acquaintances.
 - ✓ If your child wants to know about those people, he can work the program and get to a phase high enough to be allowed to receive that information. Do not enable or rescue him in this area.

Feeling Words

affectionate
appreciative
aroused
attracted
close
cozy
loving
passionate
romantic
seductive
sentimental
sexy
snuggly
tender
warm

Afraid

alarmed
anxious
appalled
apprehensive
awed
bewildered
cautious
cowardly
defensive
desperate
dismayed
fearful
fidgety
frightened
gutless
helpless
horrified
hysterical
insecure
nervous
overwhelmed
panicky
paralyzed
petrified
pressured
scared
shocked
stunned
terrified
threatened
timid
uneasy
worried

Angry

annoyed
belligerent
boiling
cross
enraged
exasperated
frustrated
furious
fuming
grim
grumpy
hostile
indignant
inflamed
infuriated
irate
irritated
offended
provoked
resentful
sulky
sullen
wrathful

Doubtful

confused
distrustful
dubious
evasive
hesitant
indecisive
mixed-up
mystified
perplexed
pessimistic
puzzled
questioning
quizzical
skeptical
suspicious
uncertain
undecided
wavering
wishy-washy

Eager

ardent
avid
challenged
desirous
earnest
enthusiastic
excited
inspired
intent
keen
spirited
zealous

Fearless

aggressive
bold
brave
courageous
confident
daring
determined
hardy
heroic
independent
powerful
reassured
secure
trusting

Happy

amused
blissful
buoyant
calm
carefree
cheerful
cheery
comfortable
complacent
contented
ecstatic
elated
enthralled
excited
exhilarated
festive
glad
grateful
hilarious
honored
hopeful
quizzical
jolly
joyful
joyous
jubilant
lighthearted
merry
optimistic
peaceful
playful
pleased
rejoicing
relaxed
restful
satisfied
serene
sparkling
thankful
thrilled
triumphant

Hurt

abandoned
aching
afflicted
agonized
chagrined
chastened
cheated
crushed
defeated
despairing
deserted
devastated
distressed
embarrassed
heartbroken
humiliated
injured
isolated
lonely
neglected
offended
pained
pathetic
rejected
suffering
tormented
tortured
upset

Interested

absorbed
challenged
compassionate
concerned
curious
engrossed
excited
fascinated
immersed
inquiring
inquisitive
inspired
intrigued
involved
sympathetic

Physical Sensations

alive
awkward
breathless
brisk
burning
chilled
cold
droopy
empty
exhausted
fatigued
feisty
fit
flushed
hollow
hot
hungry
immobilized
nauseated
paralyzed
peppy
queasy
refreshed
rejuvenated
repulsed
shaky
sick
sleepy
stretched
strong
sweaty
taut
tense
tired
uptight
weak
weary

Sad

anguished
ashamed
blah
choked-up
depressed
devastated
disappointed
discontented
discouraged
disillusioned
dismal
dreary
dull
flat
gloomy
grief-stricken
heavy-hearted
hopeless

Sad (cont'd)

ill-at-ease
low
melancholy
miserable
moody
mournful
penitent
regretful
sheepish
out-of-sorts
comber
sorrowful
sulky
sullen
unhappy
wistful
wretched

Miscellaneous

amazed
arrogant
bashful
bored
conspicuous
cooperative
creative
delirious
dependent
distant
envious
generous
humble
hypocritical
impatient
impulsive
indifferent
jealous
loyal
ornery
pensive
preoccupied
proud
quiet
relieved
ridiculous
silly
sincere
smug
surprised
tempted
thoughtful
torn
uncomfortable
withdrawn

NOTE:

These are examples of feeling words. This is not a complete list.