Healthy Family Communication Rule Ideas

Think before you speak. Take the time to think about what you want to say before you say it. Make sure your words, tone and body language reflect what you mean.

Tell the truth. It might feel like the right thing to bend or hide the truth to avoid hurting your loved ones, but being dishonest breaks trust. However, the truth should always be spoken gently and with love. Being brutally honest hurts feelings, but gentle truth builds intimacy.

Respect each other's viewpoints. Is it more important to be "right" or protect your relationship? Remember there are a lot of "rights," depending on who you are talking to, so avoid getting caught up in right vs. wrong, and instead learn to respect each other's differences.

Ask directly for what you want, desire or need. How many times have you said "He should just know what I need?" People are not mind readers, and many of us have short term memories. So keep saying "Will you please…?"

Listen to yourself. The only way for us to know how our words and tone truly sound to others is to pay attention to ourselves. Listen to how slow or fast you speak, how soft or loud you are, how loving or angry you may sound. This is what your family members hear.

Let others speak. You know how frustrating it can be when you are trying to speak and someone cuts you off in the middle of your sentence. Allowing others to speak until they are finished without interrupting is a great rule for everyone to follow.

No psychics allowed. Avoid making assumptions about another's thoughts, feelings, or anticipated behavior because none of us are mind readers. If you want to check in with someone and ask if your assumptions are true, that is okay, but you must never act on them (as if they are true) by making accusations or criticisms.

Be open about your feelings. Give absolute permission for all family members to verbalize (not act out) what they feel, see, want, think and sense. Be careful that you do not squelch feelings and perceptions you disagree with. Acknowledge and validate all feelings so there is freedom to express again in the future.

Be a good listener. When someone is speaking to you, give them your attention. Avoid thinking about what you are going to say next. Focus on what is being said, what your family member might be feeling, and how you can empathize.

Enhance your communications. You can improve your communications by learning to ask for clarification or checking in with your family member to verify your understanding. Simply say, “So what I’m hearing you say is…”, and repeat back what you heard. Communication is something we do every day, yet it’s still one of the most difficult areas in a relationship to navigate. If we practice and pass on healthy communication rules to our children, it will be easier for them to have successful relationships.