

STEPS TO SAFETY

Communication

Understanding the different styles of communication is a valuable skill for your teen to develop. Knowing their own communication style is essential. Knowing the styles others use to communicate can help your teen to better gauge the safety of the relationship they have with that person. It is important for your teen to be able to communicate effectively with peers and adults. It can be easy and comfortable for them to talk with some people. However, sometimes your teen may feel nervous or uncomfortable interacting with other people. There are many factors that can impact your teen's interactions with others.

The communication skills your teen possesses is also important in helping your teen stay safe. They must be able to communicate their wants and needs effectively. Help your teen identify some of the skills they have or skills they may need to develop in their verbal interactions with both peers and adults. These skills can help your teen feel in control and keep them safe.

Helping Your Teen Understand Communication Styles and Helping Your Teen Develop Communication Skills

Step 1

Review each of the communication styles with your teen:

 **Passive Communication** is when you accept what others are saying and doing without speaking up to try to change things. You avoid stating your thoughts, feelings, or opinions.

- Do not speak up or tend to speak softly
- Do not make eye contact
- May physically move away from conversations
- Feel anxious about saying anything

 **Aggressive Communication** is when you state your thoughts, feelings, and ideas without regard for others.

- Attempt to take control of others
- Say things that embarrass or humiliate others
- Say things that blame or criticize others
- Say things that are threatening
- Speak in a loud and demanding voice

 **Passive-Aggressive Communication** is when you appear to be passive; however, the subtle and indirect communication is meant to control others.

- Mumbling instead of stating something directly
- Using sarcasm
- Saying that nothing is wrong, but facial expressions or body language indicate that there is a problem
- Saying things that seem cooperative but doing something disruptive behind the scenes

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 **Assertive Communication** is when you stand up for yourself and state your thoughts, feelings, and opinions while being considerate of the feelings of others and not violating their rights.

- Stating what you want or need clearly
- Communicating in a way that is respectful to others
- Making good eye contact
- Using a calm and clear voice
- Making connections when talking to others
- Standing up for your rights

Step 2

Ask your teen what they think their style might be. Why do they think that is their style? Has it been a style that has been effective for them? Why or why not?

Step 3

Help your teen to understand that if they have a communication style that has been ineffective for them, they need to change it. Stress to your teen that an ineffective style of communication leaves them vulnerable and unable to have their needs and wants met.

Step 4

Using the Communication Skills Survey with your teen, discuss where their comfort level is in each of the situations in the survey.

Step 5

Work to develop the areas where your teen is less proficient and less comfortable. Structure verbal dialogues with them so they get the opportunity to sharpen their verbal skills and build their confidence to communicate effectively.

Step 6

 Look for opportunities to practice “what if” situations with your teen in effectively communicating with others. “What if someone asks you to do something you know is wrong, but you are uncomfortable communicating that to them? What would you do? What could you say?” Help them refine responses for areas of weakness so that your teen has a “script” in mind for how to respond. Soon, your teen will come to rely on their own skills to communicate what they want and need.

With your teen, observe the verbal interactions of others in various situations. Help your teen to see how effectively those situations were resolved based solely on the communication style and skills used.