

## Healthy Communication

Effective communication helps stepfamilies function and build healthy relationships. Researchers have learned that stepfamilies that use a variety of communication techniques have strong, close relationships. Spending time together as a family, spending one-on-one time together, and openly discussing family issues helps strengthen family bonds. Following good communication guidelines help stepfamilies function well.

Communication tools that help to connect stepfamilies include:

- Listening to each other
- Addressing conflict through positive methods
- Sharing information in an open manner
- Participating in activities as a family
- Nurturing relationships by showing affection
- Attending children's activities
- Establishing family rituals
- Engaging in everyday talk
- Using humor
- Paying close attention to the words they use with each other
- Maintaining a pleasant relationship with former spouse
- Modeling healthy communication techniques for children
- Compromising to solve problems



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- Healthy communication in stepfamilies
- Active listening



### Monthly tip for families:

**Complete an inexpensive, fun craft project with the entire family.**

## Active Listening

An important aspect of healthy communication involves the practice of listening. Stepfamily members should focus their full attention on the family member who is speaking. Being a good listener takes time and practice. Active listening involves the following techniques:

- Asking honest, sincere questions reinforces the fact that the stepfamily member is listening and understanding what is being said.
- Restating what is being said makes sure both stepfamily members are receiving the same message.
- Empathizing involves accepting other stepfamily members' feelings, thoughts, and ideas about a certain topic. Stepfamily members have to ignore their own perceptions of the situation in order to empathize with the other stepfamily member.



### Additional Resources:

[www.extension.usu.edu/stepfamily](http://www.extension.usu.edu/stepfamily)

[www.healthyrelationshipsutah.org](http://www.healthyrelationshipsutah.org)

[www.strongermarriage.org](http://www.strongermarriage.org)

[www.stepfamilies.info](http://www.stepfamilies.info)

[www.twoofus.org](http://www.twoofus.org)

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