

Connecting for Kids

EXTENSION
Utah State University

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
- www.healthyrelationshipsutah.org
- www.strongermarriage.org
- www.stepfamilies.info
- www.twoofus.org

For more information, contact:

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