

Parent Guide: Effective Communication [Video Guide]

Communication is a complicated topic to cover. 95% of our communication is non-verbal and subconscious. That's why before you learn WHAT to say, it's important to learn HOW to say it, too.

In this guide, we'll explore four different elements of communication so parents can get an in-depth understanding of effective communication strategies. Watch each video and reference the notes below it to review. The final part is a "phrases" guide so there are three videos in total.

Part 1: The Mirroring Technique

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<https://youtu.be/tLJFKv4GQHg>]



Parents, how many times has this happened to you?

It's a weekday morning, you've got a few minutes to get out the door to get to school on time, and your child simply refuses to put on their jacket, or their shoes, or do some other super simple task.

And no matter what you do or say, they JUST WON'T LISTEN...

This can be SO frustrating and overwhelming, and for many parents, this is a recurring morning hassle.

This video is a response to an email I received from Chelsea, mom of a seven year old, who wanted to share her question with our audience. I read her detailed question in the video, but basically Chelsea asked, "How do I get my daughter to listen to me when I ask her to do something she does not want to do?"

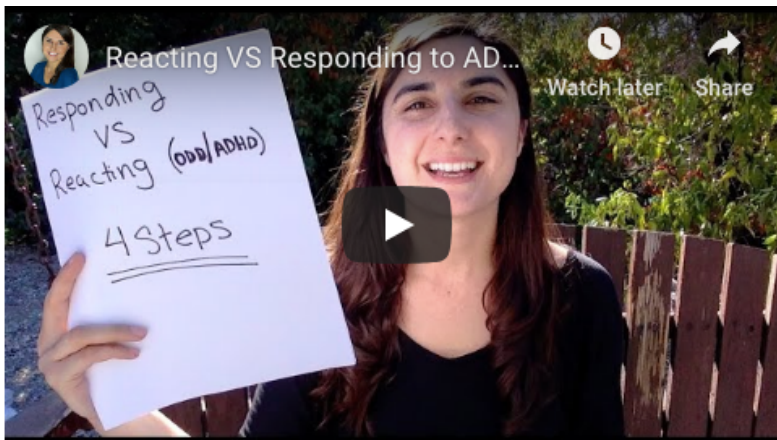
Chelsea, thank you so much for your question, I can't begin to tell you how common your story is, and how many parents can relate to your struggle.

In this video I walk you through the powerful communication technique called MIRRORING, that helps parents to build a strong rapport with their child, to empathize with them, and to more effectively communicate with your child when you need them to get something done.

Part 2: Reacting VS Responding to Opposition

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<https://youtu.be/hTWRCryr5P0>]



Parenting a child with ADHD can be extremely frustrating and challenging, especially when your child has a habit of being oppositional and testing your limits and authority.

Often times explosive battles and arguments leave both parent and child feeling shame, guilt, and frustration. This breakdown in communication causes a strain on your relationship, disrupts routines, and adds a ton of stress on top of an already stressful situation.

You know you need to approach the problem in a different way, but sometimes you feel stuck, like you don't know what to say and how to say it, and the whole situation feels hopeless.

In this Vlog, you'll learn how ADHD causes ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder), how reacting is different than responding, and how to respond when your child is being defiant. I'll share with you the exact four-step system that you can practice over and over again to slowly help your child shift their habits overtime.

VIDEO GUIDE

Goals:

1. Understand ADHD and ODD.
2. Understand Reacting vs Responding.
3. Use communication as a tool to help your child manage their emotions and actions, and help them slowly shift their behavior over time.

1. Understanding ADHD + ODD

(Source: Dr. Russell Barkley – www.russellbarkley.org)

- ADHD is a developmental disability, which means it affects how your child develops over time.
- There is no cure for it, it will need to be managed throughout their life.
- ADHD causes your child to exhibit age-inappropriate behavior.
- Their behavior levels out in early 30's but they will be behind peers their age.
- Quantitative, not qualitative difference.
- First area that ADHD affects is inhibitory control (inhibitions are what allow us to think things through - our thoughts, words, actions, and emotions)
- Children with ADHD experience the same emotions, but the difference is they impulsively express them without the ability to judge whether or not that act will get them to their desired goal.
- They are unable to self-soothe or self-calm.
- ODD - Oppositional Defiance Disorder is a consequence of ADHD...it's just a matter of time before your child's inability to manage their mood, anger, temper, or annoyance translates into hostile, defiant and conflicting interactions with parents, peers, siblings, and teachers.

2. Understanding Reacting VS Responding

Reacting to your child's negative habits with frustration, arguing, or punishment causes the problem to get worse.

Here's what happens when you REACT

- A breakdown in communication.
- A strain on your relationship.
- Feelings of anger, shame, low self-esteem.
- Lack of trust.
- The problem to reoccur/get worse.
- Trains your child to act when there's a fear of a consequence.
- Does not help your child build self-awareness.
- Reflects your child's behavior and models reactive behavior back to them.

Here's what happens when you RESPOND

- Helps your child feel heard and understood.
- Builds trust that you respect their feelings.
- Helps you reinforce limits and boundaries.
- Helps your child practice self-calming/soothing techniques.
- Helps your child learn how to solve problems.
- Gives you an opportunity to model self-awareness and self-regulation.

3. Using the FOUR-STEP Response to help your child to manage their emotions and actions.

STEP 1 - Replace TIME OUT with CALM DOWN.

- Create a "calm down" space in your home.
- Put down pillows, squeeze balls, fidget items, a photo album of family members, music, writing or drawing materials...etc.
- When your child acts out, acknowledge how they feel, and that you will help them calm down. SAY: ***"You're feeling _____, come and sit with me for a few minutes to calm down. You are showing me that you need a break, and I'll help you take a breather."***

- Acknowledge what happened, how they feel, let them express themselves. SAY, "Tell me more..." Pause, listen, and watch.
- If you find that you lost your patience, and wish to take back what you said in a heated moment, SAY: "***I was really feeling frustrated, I used a loud voice and I got upset. I forgot to take some deep breaths and what I meant to say was...***"

STEP 2 - Set a LIMIT and give a BRIEF reason for it.

- Be calm, and state it as a matter of fact.
- Don't ask questions.
- SAY, "We have a rule about video games, the limit is 1 hour so you can have time to finish homework (or dinner, or chores, or spend time w/family)."
- Be consistent in your rules and limits.
- Make it brief.

STEP 3 - Talk about better choices, suggest ways your child can help you solve the problem.

- Be positive, focus on what you want your child to do instead of what you don't want them to do.
- Use the "head-scratcher" technique to invite your child to help you solve the problem. SAY, "I wonder if there's a way we can make it easier for you to stop playing and feel better."
- Give choices.
- Be creative and use humor.
- Collaborate.

STEP 4 - Acknowledge when your child is putting in effort and catch your child being good!

- It is important to acknowledge every tiny step in the right direction.
- Don't expect your child to change overnight, instead praise every amount of effort they put into the solution.
- Catch your child being awesome, and comment on what they do well.

All of us slip up and act on our frustrations. Parenting a child with ADHD and ODD can be exhausting, frustrating, and emotionally taxing. Don't beat yourself up if you slip up once in a while and react with your frustration. Instead, use the above process to turn every conflict into a beautiful opportunity to help your child learn and grow.

Part 3: Seven Ways to Stay Calm in Any Situation

[copy/paste this link into your browser:

<https://youtu.be/MXYoQNSihVU>]



You can't have an effective conversation with your child if you are unable to remain emotionally centered. Modeling emotional self-regulation to your child is the most important non-verbal communication technique you can use to mold their behavior and help them to self-regulate.

Video #3 of our Communication Guide teaches you seven ways to keep your cool in any situation, so that you can avoid the power-struggles, arguing, whining and tears.

I've taken some notes for you below so you can review the concepts in this video at a glance:

VIDEO GUIDE

#1 GET CURIOUS

Where in your body do you feel your emotion?

- Is your jaw clenched?
- Is your neck stiff?
- Is your heart racing?
- Are you sweaty?
- Is your body tense?
- Does your stomach hurt?

#2 USE SELF TALK

Choose one or two statements to repeat to yourself in a tense moment (or create your own):

- What is she/he really telling me right now?
- What feeling is behind this emotion?
- I'm not a bad parent, I'm having normal feelings.
- It's my job to stay calm and be the bigger person.
- To her/him this is a big deal, it feels like the end of the world.

#3 VISUALIZE FEELINGS AS WAVES

Close your eyes and visualize that your emotion is an ocean wave washing over you.

- Inhale deeply and hold your breath as it washes over you and exhale.
- Repeat this as you visualize the waves getting smaller and smaller.
- You'll ride out the peak of your emotion and start to calm down.
- Repeat for 90 Seconds to get through even the most stubborn emotion.

#4 EXCUSE YOURSELF

If you just can't get a handle on your emotions, remove yourself by stating...

- "I need to take space for a few seconds, I'll be right back. I need a calm-down moment."
- Then take a moment to take a break and meet your needs.
- There is no shame in feeling angry, frustrated, annoyed, or disappointed. These are normal feelings that come with parenting, and sometimes you just need a few minutes to collect yourself.
- Come back to the conversation as soon as you can if it still needs resolving.
- This is a great skill to model to your child and they will eventually follow your lead if you practice this consistently.

#5 TALK TO SOMEONE

Find someone who can help you emotionally regulate yourself. Whether it's your therapist, a good friend, a supportive family member...etc. Having a reliable support network will help you to gain strength, clarity, and calm when you're burned out or feeling like giving up.

#6 TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN NEEDS

Find a few minutes every day to take care of your needs:

- Sleep a few extra minutes a night
- Make healthier food choices
- Exercise
- Add some fun and joy into your routine

#7 PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Be present with your kids. When you feel yourself wandering, simply bring your attention back to the present moment.

- Get down to their eye-level
- Practice eye contact
- Create a NO JUDGEMENT ZONE
- Think through your actions
- Act with intent (to solve the problem and help your child grow and co-regulate with you)
- Do not act on hope & fear, act from understanding and love

Part 4: 50 Phrases For Effective Communication

What does it mean to communicate effectively?
Communication is effective when you consistently get your desired result.

If the way you're communicating with your child now is causing lots of arguing, avoidance, and distance between you, then you know you need to change your approach.

But, figuring out exactly what to say or how to say it to get that result can be really challenging - especially when you're so used to the usual routine. That's why I've put together this list of 50 sample phrases you can apply in many common situations.

These phrases may seem simple, but they are very carefully crafted to help you connect with your child on a deeper level and speak to your child in a way they'll actually listen!



I've organized them into four categories:

- 1 - encouraging open dialogue and honest communication
- 2 - helping your child through challenges at school
- 3 - setting limits, boundaries and expectations
- 4 - positively reinforcing better habits

Check out the 50 sample phrases below:

Say this to encourage open and honest conversations.

- Tell me more about that.
- You sound frustrated. When you can say that in your regular voice, I'll be ready to listen.
- What was it like when she said that?
- Why do you think your friend did that?
- Thank you for sharing how I made you feel, I will be more aware of that next time.
- Thank you for asking...
- Thank you for letting me know.
- What's your opinion on _____?
- I see that you're upset, can you fill me in on what happened?
- I can see how that would make you feel annoyed/upset. What else happened?
- I hear you, that must be difficult.
- What were you worried would happen if you did that?
- Did you know I had the same feeling when I was your age? [Tell a short story] Is that how you were feeling?
- I know you don't feel like talking, let's take a break to calm down and set aside 10 minutes to finish this conversation at X o'clock.
- I know that was difficult for you to share, and I appreciate you being honest.

Say this to help your struggling student.

- I am confident that you will figure it out, let me know how I can help.
- I'm impressed with how much work you put into that paper/project/test, even if you didn't get the grade you hoped for.
- I know that didn't turn out the way you wanted, but I'm really proud of you for trying. Next time, I'm sure you will get even better!
- I know you're super tired after baseball and the LAST thing you want to think about is homework, but this English paper is due tomorrow. How long do you think it's going to take you to finish? OR What will help you stay focused?
- What is the most difficult part of this assignment? What would make it a little easier for you?

- I would love for you to go to the mall with your friends, but you have a lot of homework due tomorrow and you just don't have the time tonight. What's something really fun you can do instead when you finish your homework?
- I can see you are overwhelmed with the amount of work you have to do, what is the most important thing you can focus on getting done? Do you want start with the easiest or hardest; the most important; your favorite subject or least favorite first?
- How long, realistically, do you think this will take you?
- This is a big project, how can you break it into smaller chunks? OR What days will you work on it this month so that you can finish it on time?
- I know you don't understand your science homework, so why don't you pick three questions to try out, and write down all your questions for your teacher tomorrow?
- This project is due tomorrow, but it looks like you will not have enough time to finish. Let's email your teacher and let him/her know you will need some more time to turn it in. How much more time do you think you will need?

Say this to set limits, boundaries, and expectations.

- I see that you have a lot of energy and want to play, but it is bedtime and I am going to tell you the funniest story after you brush your teeth and get your pajamas on!
- I know you really, really, really want to keep playing your video game, and it feels so unfair that you have to stop and go to bed, but you know your bedtime and I need you to turn it off right now. [Pause and wait for them to turn it off, do not respond to whining or negotiation, just wait patiently.]
- You're upset because you wanted a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for dinner, but tonight we are eating chicken salad. Let's make a sandwich for breakfast tomorrow, or I can pack you one for school. Which one would you prefer?
- I know you really want both toys, but we only have enough money for one/ agreed that you will only buy one toy today. If you cannot pick one, I will help pick one for you. AND/OR Let's play with both of them for 1 minute to decide which one is more fun!
- I know you don't mind if your bedroom is messy, but it is important to get organized so you do not lose your things. How can you design this space so that all your things are easy to find?
- I know you hate cleaning your room, what can you do to make it more fun? AND/OR Is there anything I can help you do?
- I realize I made a mistake when I said you could play with the iPad today. It's not a good choice because you have other activities to do today and we need to make time for them.
- Oops, you forgot to clean up the mess in the living room, I'll bring a trash bag for you.

- Oops, you spilled your juice, I'll toss you a sponge.
- We do not hit, because it hurts other people.
- We are leaving the playground now because it's getting dark.
- We are going into the store now, today we're just buying food for dinner.
- I know you don't want to get out of bed, you're so cozy. You're like a giant caterpillar in a cocoon...wait, I think I see a wing popping out!

Say this to positively reinforce better habits/help your child solve problems.

- I don't like when you hit your sister, but I love when you give her a hug!
- What can you do differently next time to get what you want?
- I noticed you took out the trash without me asking you, yay!
- I saw that you shared your favorite toy/the last slice of pizza/the remote with your brother and it made him so happy! That made me smile.
- I really appreciated that you didn't push your sister back when she pushed you, I know that took a lot of patience.
- Do you remember the last time something was really hard for you to do? How does it feel now?
- I feel hurt that you were dishonest with me, but I love that you came to me and told me the truth.
- I'm hearing a lot of what you don't like, not what you would like to happen. What's your idea?
- Can you tell me what you want, instead of what you don't want? That way I can help you.
- Do you want to put that back, or should I put it back for you?
- Want to take a short walk while we figure out what to do?

Shifting communication habits takes **a lot of time, effort, and persistence.** This goes for both you and your child. Transforming the way you communicate will take a lot of practice and you can expect to hit lots of turbulence along the way. That's to be expected! Your child will test your strength, your patience, and your boundaries, so your job is to stay centered and confident.

No matter what, don't give up! Keep moving forward and celebrate every single victory along the way, no matter how tiny!