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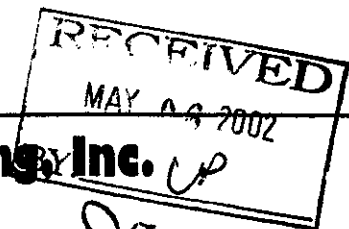
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CHRIS G



Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc.



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Volume 11, Issue 5 May/June 2002 Terri Dawson, Director Nancy Pedro, Editor

Family communication tips

How many times have you asked your child about his day, only to hear that it was "okay," and he did "nothing." Sometimes it seems impossible to get more than one word answers out of your child, and it is difficult to really know what they are up to, and how they feel about it.

One thing we need to look at is the ratio of positive, encouraging words we say to our children compared to the number of complaints, orders, criticisms, warnings, and discouraging words. Social research on family communication indicates that parents and children spend an average of only twenty minutes a day talking to each other. When that interaction is negative – a complaint, a command, or a request for assistance – it is not likely to encourage our children to want to increase communication. Many young people say that the only time they hear anything from their parents is when they "screw up."

Putting the emphasis on the positive – the child's positive – should become the focus of our interactions with our children. It takes more time to let our child know that we have noticed how kind she has been to her friend who is going through a crisis, or to tell our son how much we appreciate that he mowed the lawn – but it is worth the effort. Letting our children know how much we love and appreciate them every day should be at the core of our communication.

Here are some tips that will improve communication:

- **Make the time** – In today's busy world it is sometimes difficult to find time – but it is even more important now to MAKE time to talk with your children.

Continued on page 2...

Governor signs graduation bill

On March 11, 2002, Governor Geringer signed a bill into law that provides for school districts to place endorsements on the transcripts of graduating students beginning in 2005. The law will allow more Wyoming students to graduate from high school.

The law still requires that all students graduating from Wyoming schools successfully complete four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science and three years of social studies. However, under this law, ALL students do not have to show proficiency in ALL of the educational standards set by the State Board of Education.

The three endorsements and the requirements they have are:

- **Advanced** – requires a student to demonstrate advanced performance in a majority of the areas of the common core of knowledge and skills, and proficient performance in the remaining areas of the specified common core of

Continued on page 2...

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Volume 11, Issue 5 (May/June 2002)

Table of Contents

Family communication tips, cont'd	2
Gov. signs graduation bill, cont'd	2
PIC PARTICULARS	3
EIC-Language of Love & Laughter	4
Early Intervention News	5
PEN POINTERS	6
Children & Internet Safety	7
Is your child ready for camp?	8
Summer Safety Tips	8
Summer camps	9
Reactive Attachment Disorder	10
Partners in Policymaking	11
Family Voices in Wyoming	11
No. WY. Childhood Lang. Clinic	12
Youth Leadership Forum	12
Transition Tips	13
Spotlight: Spina Bifida	13
PIC/PEN Information	14
Nat'l Down Syndrome Convention	15
Upcoming Events	16

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Family communication tips, cont'd. . .

- **Really listen and don't interrupt** – Children have to trust that you listen about the everyday stuff before they are comfortable discussing the heavy issues. Sometimes parents have to listen to what their children are not saying and pay attention to the emotions that accompany certain discussions. Give children a chance to explain themselves, and to express opinions and desires. If you interrupt with an opinion of your own or to reprimand our children before you've given them a chance to explain, it tells them you don't consider their feelings and reasons valid.
 - **Ask specific questions that cannot be answered with yes or no** – Questions like "What did you do in science today?" or "How do you feel about the kids getting kicked off the basketball team for breaking curfew?" let your children know that you care about the specifics of their day and their thoughts and feelings and what is happening around them.
 - **Tell your children about your day** – Sometimes telling a funny story or relating something unusual that happened to you will open up discussion and encourage your children to tell about their day or feelings.
- Important words to use with your children**
- **"Please" and "thank-you"** – You teach your children to use these "magic words," but how often do you forget to say them? When asking children to do something, saying please lets them know that you are asking them for a behavior that will help or make you happy. Saying thank-you lets your children know that you see and acknowledge them. A child who knows that a parent recognizes and appreciates helpful behavior and thoughtful actions, will be much more likely to repeat those behaviors.
 - **You can do it!** – Let your child know that you have confidence in his ability to do many things. Your encouragement may mean the difference between his giving up on a difficult task and seeing it through.
 - **How can I help?** – Sometimes just knowing that Mom or Dad is there if they run into something they can't handle is all the help children need. Sometimes when they have taken on a task that is difficult, they just need help to break the task down into manageable pieces. Sometimes they truly need help to accomplish the task. (Show your child it is okay to ask for help by asking them to help you sometimes.)
 - **Good job!** – Self-respect and self-confidence grow when your child's performance and efforts are rewarded. Focus on your child's strengths, efforts and progress, and give genuine praise often.
 - **How about a hug?** – Research shows that young children deprived of physical touch and displays of affection fail to thrive. Tiffany Field, Director of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami, says, "Touch is as essential to the growth and well-being of a child as diet and exercise." As children get older, they may go through a stage where they don't like to be hugged and cuddled – especially in front of their friends – but still need affection and touch. A pat on the shoulder or a private hug can let your child know that you care.
 - **I love you!** – Don't assume your child knows you love him or her. Show and tell your child often. Everyone needs love and affection and a feeling of acceptance and belonging. Everyone needs to hear the words and receive the hugs! In our uncertain world, it is extremely important to communicate with your children and to tell them that you love them every single day.

* Governor signs graduation bill, cont'd . . .

- knowledge and skills, as defined by the uniform student content and performance standards.
- Comprehensive endorsement which requires a student to demonstrate proficient performance in all areas of the common core of knowledge and skills specified in the uniform student content and performance standards.
 - General endorsement which requires a student to demonstrate proficient performance in a majority of the areas of the common core of knowledge and skills specified in the uniform student content and performance standards.

One of the above endorsements shall be stated on the transcript of each student.

The content and performance standards for the common core of knowledge and a statewide assessment system for measuring student progress is set by the State Board of Education in consultation and coordination with

local school districts.

The board of trustees in each school district establishes a student assessment system to measure student performance relative to the uniform student content and performance standards in all content areas for which the state has published standards. School districts are also responsible for providing educational programs that meet uniform student content and performance standards as set by the State Board of Education.

What this means for students, for example, is that a student with a learning disability in math who may not be able to meet the standards for higher level math (such as Algebra I or II), but can do basic math which will allow him or her balance a checkbook or adjust a recipe, has passed three years of math in high school, and has met all other standards to a proficient level, will be able to graduate.