
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Helping Kids Communicate



**April
2019**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Communication skills are at the top of almost every list of important skills for today's workers. Employers continue to cite the need for improvements in their workers' ability to communicate well with coworkers, supervisors and customers.

Considered a "soft skill" or interpersonal skill, workers should be able to communicate effectively verbally and in writing,

Helping children practice their communication skills

Students can have an edge in the job market if they develop these skills in school and through real-life situations. Social media interaction may be causing greater real-life isolation — people who are comfortable with digital communication lack practice with in-person conversation.

In a Screenagers blog post, Dr. Delaney Ruston shares how she helps her children build their conversational confidence in public by encouraging them to ask for what they want as a customer and making friendly conversation with others.

"Today I was talking with a 12-year-old about social media and self-confidence and he told me that posting pictures of himself doing cool things can "boost" his confidence. He then added, "... but, I feel like most of my confidence comes from actually talking to people in person because it is a lot harder."

Since my kids were toddlers I started encouraging them to ask questions, make comments, ask directions, make requests, give compliments, and order food from people in the world that are new to them (in safe settings, of course). I am purposely not using the word "stranger" because that has taken on such negative connotations--the fact that it has "strange" in the word, the idea of "stranger danger", etc."

<http://bit.ly/2tMPfqb>

The ideal job applicant is comfortable in social interactions and in workplace conversations. If they have these abilities, they will have an edge in the job market and may actually live longer as well, according to a report cited by Dr. Ruston:

"In a Forbes interview [former Surgeon General Vivek] Murthy said "Loneliness and weak social connections are associated with a reduction in lifespan similar to that caused by smoking 15 cigarettes a day and even greater than that associated with obesity. Loneliness is also associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, depression, and anxiety."

(Over)

Top 10 communication skills: A list by recruiters and hiring managers

When students are ready to apply for work, they should focus on improving workplace communication skills. It is important to note that communication is a two-way process that includes what is said and how messages are conveyed nonverbally.

Listening: If you're not a good listener, it's going to be hard to comprehend what you're being asked to do. Take the time to practice active listening, paying close attention to what the other person is saying, asking clarifying questions, and rephrasing what the person says to ensure understanding.

Nonverbal Communication: Your body language, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone of voice color the message you are trying to convey. A relaxed, open stance and a friendly tone will make you appear approachable. Look the person in the eye to demonstrate that you are focused on the conversation; however, be sure not to stare.

Clarity and Concision: Good verbal communication means saying just enough — don't talk too much or too little. Try to convey your message clearly and directly, whether you're speaking to someone in person, on the phone, or via email.

Friendliness: Through a friendly tone, a personal question, or simply a smile, you will encourage your coworkers to engage in open and honest communication with you. It's important to be nice and polite in all your workplace communications.

Confidence: Confidence shows your coworkers that you believe in what you're saying and will follow through. Exuding confidence can be as simple as making eye contact or using a firm but friendly tone.

Empathy: Using phrases as simple as, "I understand where you are coming from" demonstrate that you have been listening to the other person and respect their opinions. Even when you disagree with an employer, coworker, or employee, it is important for you to understand and respect their point of view.

Open-Mindedness: Enter into conversation with a flexible, open mind. Be open to listening to and understanding the other person's point of view, rather than simply getting your message across, even with people with whom you disagree.

Respect: People will be more open to communicating with you if you convey respect for them and their ideas. Using a person's name, making eye contact, and actively listening when a person speaks will make the person feel appreciated. On the phone, avoid distractions and stay focused on the conversation. Convey respect through email by editing your message so it is not sloppily written or confusing.

Feedback: Being able to appropriately give and receive feedback is an important communication skill. Managers and supervisors should continuously look for ways to provide constructive feedback through email, phone calls, or weekly status updates.

Picking the Right Medium: An important communication skill is to simply know what form of communication to use. For example, some serious conversations (layoffs, resignation, changes in salary, etc.) are almost always best done in person.