



FAMILIES

TACKLING TOUGH TIMES

TOGETHER



FAMILY

YOUTH

We Tell Each Other the Truth! Clear, Consistent Messages

While we are receiving a lot of information about COVID-19 from different sources that can be overwhelming, most teens use social media as their main source of information and news. It is important that teens learn how to determine if messages are true and accurate. Communicating clearly supports understanding and informed decision-making.

Communicating Clearly

In addition to making sure our teens have reliable resources for information, we need to make sure our teens understand how to communicate their thoughts and needs. When teens have the skills to better communicate, they are better able to deal with and share life's stresses.

Communicating Clearly Activities

- **Using “I” statements.** Good communication requires skills such as using “I” statements. This allows you and your teen to share feelings and needs without blame while helping each other to understand one another’s perspective. Below is an example of an “I” statement:

“I feel angry when I can’t go see my friends because I’m bored and I miss them. Could we plan a social distanced visit sometime soon?”

- **Help your teen to understand another’s perspective.** Invite your teen to ask someone in your family to “*metaphorically*” exchange shoes. Encourage them to think about how the other person may think and feel by asking the below questions:
 - Why did you select this person’s shoes?
 - Would someone else’s shoes have been easier or more difficult to wear?
 - Do you think their shoes feel different this year compared to the way they may have felt a year ago?
 - Do you think their shoes feel different now compared to how they may have felt before the pandemic?
 - What feelings or emotions do you think the owner of the shoes might like to share?
 - What is something you think you better understand about the owner of the shoes now that you have “worn them?”

You may wish to lighten the mood after the above activity by introducing some humor. Consider doing a social media challenge where family members swap shoes, while following social distancing guidelines!

To learn more about the science behind using “I” statements rather than “you” statements and the importance of teaching social empathy to adolescents, you may wish to read the below research:

- [Verbalized Anger and Accusatory “You” Messages as Cues for Anger and Antagonism Among Adolescents](#)
- [Social Empathy as a Framework for Adolescent Empowerment](#)