

Week 3 :

Communication Skills



Communication

Round Robin Stories

Objective:

- Develop listening skills
- Learning to listen to, and build off, others ideas

Materials:

- String or twine cut into pieces approximately 6 feet (2 meters) long
- Audio taping device (cell phone, recorder, etc.)

SEL Home Activity:

Get two or more family members sitting in a circle. Each person is handed the end of one piece of string. A leader is selected to hold the other end of all the strings (*example:* one parent or child). Inform everyone that, after listening to the opening first two sentences of the story, the leader will pull on someone's string. That person must then add more to the story building on what has been said so far.. When the string is pulled a second time that person stops and another person's string is pulled and he/she will add to what was been said so far as well. Stress that it is important to listen closely to one another such that you will understand what direction the story is taking and can build upon it.

Turn on your recording device and begin the story with no more than two lines, e.g., "*Once there was a young girl who had just moved to a new town. On her first day at her new school ...*" now pull a child's string for him/her to finish this sentence and add two more line. Continue to randomly move back and forth or around the circle having different children or family members adding to the story until you have a finished your family Round Robin story.

Listen to your Round Robin Story together. Then, have someone type and print the story for anyone to read at any time they so choose. Do this activity several times with a different person serving as the leader and starting with a new story opening. [Save your stories in a binder as a family 'heirloom' to be enjoyed in future years during family gatherings].

Closure: Ask everyone how it felt to do this activity. Did they have any difficulty making the connection between the previous ideas and the new one they wanted to add? How is this skill important when you work with others?

Other Possible Family Learning Activities:

- Have older children's write the first paragraph for a creative story. Then have each family member in turn add to it by writing 3-4 lines more. Have each person put their initials beside their portion of the story until you've developed a "Family Round Robin Story". Add it to your family story binder.



Communication

Expressing Appreciation & Gratitude

Objective:

- To learn to express appreciation to others for what they have done or meant to you.
- To learn how our actions and character are recognized and appreciated by others.

Materials:

- Writing paper or, recording device

SEL Home Activity:

Read the story of Mr. Samuels & Monika (below, it's a true story!). Then, share with your child a story about someone who had an especially positive impact on your life; include what they did and why that meant so much to you.

Then, invite your child to write a '*Letter of Appreciation*' to someone that has helped or supported them or has had some positive effect but to whom you have never truly told or acknowledged this important impact they've had in your life. (The letters should be at least two paragraphs).

Consider mailing your letters to these special people also.

Example:

Dear, _____

I just wanted to take a moment to let you know how important you have been in my life.

When, I...

Sincerely,

Other Possible Family Learning Activities:

- Together, write 'Thank you' notes to friends, relatives, etc. for gifts or acts of kindness.
- Have other family members share similar stories about people who have had a special impact on their lives (Can be a dinner table exercise or each person write a 'Letter of Appreciation' and then share the letters during dinner or a family time).

Mr. Samuels & Monika

Mr. Samuels had been a teacher of high school science for 29 years and very much enjoyed his job. He had recently been promoted to Science Department Head and thought he had reached the peak of his career.

Then, one Sunday morning, Mr. Samuel's doorbell rang. When he opened the door, he found a former student standing on his doorstep; Monika. Her mother stood behind her on the front walk. Monika had been a student in Mr. Samuels' class about 8 years ago. She came from a poor family and neither of her parents had ever graduated from high school. Monika too struggled in class and often expressed her frustration with school saying, *"I'll never pass in Physics, I'm just not good for anything!"* Mr. Samuels would always just smile and reply, *"Monika, pluck up your courage, you will make it if only you try; I'm sure you will get a good grade!"*. When Monika graduated, Mr. Samuels signed her yearbook with this phrase, ***"If you wonder how to do a job, get started and then wonder how you did it!"***

Now, early on this Sunday morning, Monika and her mother stood smiling at his front door. Monika told Mr. Samuels that she had successfully gone on after high school and graduated from college with a B.Ed. degree (with Honors) and wanted to present him with a copy of her research thesis. It was a comprehensive study on the relationship between achievement and student socioeconomic background.

Monika told Mr. Samuels she wanted him to have a copy because. "I dedicated her thesis to you, Mr. Samuels!" He opened to the dedication page and read,

"I dedicate this thesis to Mr. Samuels, one of my past high school teachers thanks to whom I started believing more in myself and consequently succeeded in education. Indeed, I will never forget his words, 'If you wonder how to do a job, get started and then wonder how you did it.'"

Mr. Samuels would later say, *I had always thought that the past success of my students on their Physics exams was THE SATISFACTION of teaching. But, Monika's dedication message made me realize that I had not just taught Monika about Physics, but I had also taught her to believe in herself...to "light the fire in herself!"*

"Now I realized that there is a more important side to teaching", Mr. Samuels said. Because of Monika's thesis dedication expressing her appreciation and gratitude, Mr. Samuels then realized he'd now truly reached the true peak of his teaching career. Thanks to Monika's expression of gratitude, Mr. Samuels dedicated himself from that day onward to focusing on this *"more important side"* to his teaching along with the imparting of knowledge in science to his students.