

Happy Talk!

Goal: To learn that the social and emotional positive action of communicating positively helps us to feel good about ourselves.

Read the following story about the Sayer Family.

Positive Thoughts



"Dumbhead! Dumbhead!"

"Pick up your towel, Tom. Pick up your towel, Tom. Pick up your towel, Tom."

"Hoo, baby."

*"I hate spinach. You don't know how I really, really, **really**, hate it."*

"Hoo, baby."

"Yikes. Yikes. Yikes."

"Hoo, baby."

"Turn off that TV. I'm trying to think here!"

"Kiss me goodbye, you little brown-eyed sweetie."

All the little brown-eyed sweeties around the breakfast table laughed-out loud. The Sayers family had a new bird, a parrot named Patches. For the month they'd had him, Patches hadn't said a word. But apparently, he'd been listening because this morning Patches repeated all their pet phrases, complete with inflection, timing, and volume.

"Hey, Patches," Tom said, "welcome to the family!"

"Hoo, baby," Patches said.

"Dad, do you think we say more positive things or more negative things to one another?" Tom asked.

"I don't know, Tom. But that's a great question."

Mrs. Sayers nodded. "I know how we can get the answer. Tomorrow I'll go to the bank and get a hundred pennies for each of us and a hundred pennies for the pot. Then every time we say something positive to one another, we'll put a penny in the pot. Every time we say something negative, we'll take out a penny. At the end of the week, we'll count the pennies in the pot and see if we have more than a hundred pennies or fewer."

"Great idea," Sarah said. *"Yikes!"* said Patches.

The Sayers carried through with their plan. In fact, they got a hundred pennies for Patches, too. Every time he said something positive, they put in a penny for him. And they took a penny out every time he said something negative.

At the end of the week they all sat down to count the pennies. "55, 60, 65, 70." They kept counting. "100, 110, 115, 120, 121." That was good; they were a little more positive than negative. And they promised one another they'd work on being more positive.

Even Patches got some positive points. He figured out that when he said, "*Kiss me goodbye, you little brown-eyed sweetie,*" someone would come over and blow him a kiss. "*Hoo, baby,*" he'd say. "*Hoo, baby.*"

Group Discussion

Our words are powerful. So are our voices and our body language.

Has anyone said something so positive to you that you felt great all day? Or have you ever been hurt by someone's harsh words? Or been offended by cursing and bad language? Have you ever been the victim of someone's silent, negative judgment, and you knew it even though no words were exchanged? How we communicate can make or break our relationships. We all want others to communicate positively with us, so we need to do the same for them. Communicating positively is probably on our list of ways we like to be treated and part of our Code of Conduct.

Communication is the way we give and receive information. Communicating positively is giving and receiving information in a way that treats people with respect and love.

Positive communication is Happy Talk, talk that can make ourselves and others happy. It's speaking out in positive ways. It's saying, "I love you," "Good job," "I'm so glad to see you," or "I'm sorry." It's also keeping our lips zipped when we're tempted to say something cruel or critical or unkind.

Communicating positively is a positive action that helps us get along with other people and makes us feel good about ourselves. In fact, how well we get along with others depends on how positively we communicate with them. No one likes whining, teasing, sarcasm, or put-downs, and no one likes lying, cursing, or bad language. And no one ever likes the silent treatment. What we do like is positive communication. What we need from other people is clear, caring, honest, and positive communication. That's the way we need to communicate. Our good feelings about ourselves depend on it.

We communicate in a positive way when we are honest with other people. We say what we're feeling or thinking clearly, and kindly, so other people don't have to guess what's on our minds. We say what we're feeling and thinking accurately. We don't leave out big pieces of information; we don't fudge with the facts. We risk miscommunication if we aren't clear and factual in what we say. It's risky to talk about what's going on inside our hearts and our heads. But generally, other people appreciate it when we're clear about what we're thinking, what we're doing, and what we're feeling.

We communicate in positive ways when we're positive about other people. It's tough to be around people who continually find fault, people who are sarcastic or cynical, or people who want to blame other people when things go wrong. We like people who say good things about other people, who believe that most people do the best they can under the circumstances. We like it particularly well when they are talking about us.

We communicate in a positive way when we listen. Listening carefully to another person is one of the best gifts we can give that person. It means that we value the person, that we think what he or she is saying is important. Listening and understanding what another person is feeling and thinking is one of the ways we show love and empathy for that person. It helps people form and strengthen their bonds with one another.

We communicate with body language, too. Our faces can reflect sincere caring and concern, or they can reflect displeasure and contempt. When we laugh, our whole body laughs. When we grumble, our whole body expresses it. Our cold shoulders, unconcerned shrugs, and turned-up noses can express negative

messages. So, of course, do threatening and intimidating body language and words. Our hugs, snuggles, and kisses are all positive, important communications we send and receive. Best of all, we can smile.

Our bodies, our faces, and our voices communicate what we're feeling and thinking whether we know it or not. Our voices can be saying kind words, but if we're frowning, then we are sending mixed messages to people. They probably won't believe our kind words. In fact, there are times when our faces, our bodies, and our tones of voice communicate more than our words.

Negative communication can hurt people. Yelling at one another in anger, calling one another bad names, using bad language, or being harshly critical of another person are devastating. We need to find positive ways to communicate with one another.

Communicating positively with one another can help prevent and resolve conflicts. By communicating kindly and fairly and with love, empathy, and respect for the other person, we can work toward resolving a conflict in a positive way. Loving words, respectful actions, and an honest approach help keep the conflict resolved.

Positive communication includes being courteous, friendly, and gracious. It's saying hello, please, or thank you. It's sending notes and letters and telling people that you love them and that you appreciate them. Expressing gratitude is a big part of positive communication. Sharing positive experiences and stories, especially positive family stories, is important. Remembering these occasions brings us closer together and reinforces the best in all of us. Special moments of communication are gifts we can give one another anytime, all the time. **So let's start making Happy Talk!**

QUESTIONS:

What is Happy Talk? Why is it important to communicate positively with one another? Why is it important to be courteous to people when we communicate with them? Why is it important to be positive about other people? Why do we need to avoid cursing, bad language, communicating in anger, and being harsh or critical to others? What are mixed messages? How do we feel about ourselves when we use positive communication?

Put It in Action:

Let's practice communicating positively by taking turns doing an exercise with our saltshaker.

Get out the saltshaker.

Place the saltshaker on the table in front of you. With a frown on your face and using a harsh, loud voice, say to the shaker, "You're the best shaker I've ever had; I hope you last forever." You can use different words but try saying something nice while using negative body language and a negative tone of voice.

Take turns role-playing with the saltshaker.

Now, in a voice as neutral and as flat as you can manage, say to the saltshaker, "You're probably the best shaker that's ever been made." If you are good, you might find it hard to keep a monotone voice with everyone laughing.

Take turns role-playing with the saltshaker.

How would the poor shaker be feeling?

Now if it were a person? What could be said to help a real person in the same situation?

Discuss feelings and perceptions.

Finally, while facing the saltshaker, smile, nod your head in a positive way, and say, "Yes, we're really happy to have a saltshaker like you."

Take turns role-playing with the saltshaker.

Discuss how you feel when you communicate positively with others.

Make a Commitment

Now let's plan to use positive communication in our family this week. Let's be aware of how we're communicating verbally and physically. Let's make an effort to use Happy Talk as much as we can. Let's try not to send mixed messages or use the silent treatment. Let's communicate as openly and as positively as we can. Don't forget to say, "I love you." Let's see how our efforts to communicate positively with one another in our family make us feel about ourselves.