

# The Esperia

ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES, STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS  
OF THE EVENING GYMNASIUM AND LYCEUM IN TRIKALA

GRUNDTVIG PARTNERSHIP 2013-2015

“ENGAGING DISADVANTAGED PARENTS TO  
ACQUIRE PARENTING SKILLS ”

EDPAPS

**GRU-13-C-LP-216- TM-RO**

**“ 10 steps for improving my relationship with my child.”**



Family is a live “system” which keeps developing continuously. It can take various forms, sometimes be in unbalance and then again find its balance. The basic prerequisite for this are flexibility and cohesion between its members. Furthermore, there should be effective communication as well as stability, clear limits and agreed obligations and rights.

**10 steps** ( good practices) to improve the daily communication and promote the relationship between parents and children:

### **1. Active listening**

It is important to listen to our children carefully and patiently, giving them time and space to express themselves. In this way, we can infer the emotions hidden behind the words uttered. It is necessary to take our children’s “place” as we should never forget that: whatever seems of no importance to us may be extremely important for our children. We function as a mirror that decodes the child’s feelings, a kind of living feedback, so as to help them see their problems more clearly and reconsider them. In this way, children:

- Learn to express and not be afraid of negative feelings.
- Learn to think for themselves.
- Feel that we trust them, so their self esteem is reinforced.
- Are helped to solve their problems, so they learn to take initiatives and prepare for their adult life.

### **2. Stay available - Prioritize time with your child**

The relationship with our children is the most important one and we should make our children realize that we are always available for them. We should always find time to spend with our children, no matter how demanding our everyday activities are. Grocery shopping, carpooling and bath time matter as much as that big talk you have when there's a problem. “In relationships without quantity there’s no quality”.

### **3. Characterize the behavior, not the child. Use The “I – Statement”**

Using the “I – statement” our emotions and intentions can be understood by our children. The “I – statement” is not threatening for the child and it can rarely cause a negative interaction. On the contrary, it creates an honest relationship between parents and children. For example, we may say “It is irresponsible to come home late, without letting us know first” instead of “You are irresponsible” or “Your actions embarrassed me” instead of “You embarrassed me”.

#### **4. Tension control – Opportunity for a friendly discussion – Accepting the child**

During the communication with our children it is important to have a calm and positive attitude showing stability and determination. We should keep eye contact with them and we should also keep our voice down. If we are tired or stressed by our problems and we can't control our reactions, it would be a good idea to have a time-out, withdraw for a while and start talking again when we have calmed down. We should avoid ask too many questions, nagging, being sarcastic and ironic. We should also try not to make fun of our children or underestimate them and calling them names. We respect and accept our children the way they are and not as we would like them to be. During the conversation we stress out their positive points and we teach them to accept their qualities and vices.

#### **5. Ask open – ended questions**

These questions give children the chance to tell us more. Actually, they are a kind of invitation to talk and express themselves. We could use phrases like: "I would like to hear more about this..." Or "I would like to discuss this subject..." Or "I would like to know what you think about this.../what's your opinion about..." In this way children are encouraged to get closer to their parents, to open up and talk to us about their feelings and thoughts. Thus, families cultivate intimacy and promote sincere and constructive conversations.

#### **6. Looking for alternatives**

Alternative solutions to problems are effective especially in parent – children conflicts. The parent listens actively to the child who has already freely expressed his/her thoughts on a problem and comes to understand the child's feelings. They cooperate to find alternative solutions to the problems. We could use phrases like "Would you like to tell me the things you could do?" , "How would you like to handle this matter?" By using alternative solutions, children develop their mental skills, are not pressed to react and there is no need for power use. Also, children learn to take initiatives, to become more responsible and independent, while cooperating with parents.

## **7. We trust and encourage our children**

We try to show, through our words and actions, that we trust our children and their abilities. Moreover, we encourage their initiatives so as to reinforce their self esteem, the expression of their thoughts and dealing with difficulties more easily. Children need to know that they have adults by their side.

ATTENTION!!!! We should not be over – protective, because then children become dependent on their parents and as a result, they do not learn to take initiatives and become insecure.

## **8. Resist the impulse to be punitive**

Parents should handle their anger and avoid being punitive by setting effective limits. How would you feel about someone who hurt, threatened or humiliated you, “for your own good?” Children do need our guidance, but punishing them always erodes our relationship, which makes our child misbehave more.

## **9. Don't take it personally**

When your children: slam the door and say: «You never understand me! " or " I hate you ! " consider their tangled up feelings , their difficulty controlling themselves, their immature ability to understand and express their emotions . So you must remember not to take it personally and:

- Take a deep breath.
- Let the hurt go.
- Remind yourself that your child does in fact love you but can't get in touch with it at the moment.
- Consciously lower your voice.
- Try hard to remember what it feels like to be a kid who is upset and over-reacting.
- Think through how to respond calmly and constructively.  
Your child will be deeply grateful, even if he can't acknowledge it at the moment.

## **10. Re - connect after every separation**

Parents naturally provide an anchor, or compass for kids to attach to and stay oriented around. When the child is apart from his/her parents he/she needs a substitute, so he orients himself around teachers, coaches, electronics or peers. We know that every difficulty is an opportunity to get closer so when we rejoin with our child physically we need to also rejoin emotionally.

Coming to a conclusion, we can see that there are no magic solutions. Parents should be realistic, meaning, they should well realize their children developmental stage and should also adapt their expectations and attitude to that. They should always be wise and calm enough so as to be able to set limits and be stable in keeping them.

Finally **love and genuine interest for our children and their needs (which must be expressed continuously) will promote and improve our relationship with them.**

