

Antelope Springs Basic Parenting, Session 8

Agenda

1. Basics of Listening Skills
2. Listening skills/exercise
3. Dyad practice
4. Competition and cooperation conceptual base
5. Enhancing cooperation in the family interaction

Read the following quote out loud in your small group and then go over the study questions below.

*“Most failures of understanding are NOT due to self-absorption or bad faith, **but to defensive reactions that crowd out understanding and concern.** Each of us has characteristic ways of reacting emotionally in key relationships. We don’t hear what’s said because something in speaker’s message triggers hurt, anger or fear. Unfortunately, all the advice in the world about “active listening” can’t overcome the maddening tendency to react to each other in this way. To become better listeners, and use empathy to transform our relationships, we **MUST IDENTIFY and HARNESS** the emotional triggers that generate anxiety and cause misunderstanding and conflict. **We can understand each other, once we learn to recognize OUR OWN DEFENSIVE reactions and TAKE CHARGE OF OUR RESPONSES.**”*

Michael P. Nichols Ph.D. The Lost Art of Listening

Study Questions

1. What are some of your defensive reactions? When was the last time you displayed them? What happened to your listening skills at that moment?
2. What do you think Nichols means by “identify and harness” the emotional triggers? Talk about some ways that you might do both of those processes.
3. What is meant by “recognize and take charge of our responses”? How might you do that in the next few weeks? Months? Years?
4. Discuss what might happen in your relationships if you were able to “recognize and take charge” of your responses at least 50% more effectively than you do now.
5. How do you know if you have “empathy” or not? And why do you think Nichols says that “to become better listeners and USE EMPATHY to transform our relationships”? How can you do this more effectively now? Can empathy be taught? How?

Competition and Cooperation **A study in contrasts**

“David and Roger Johnson and their colleagues published an ambitious meta-analysis (that is, a review of other’s findings). In what is surely the most conclusive survey of its kind, they reviewed 122 studies from 1924 to 1980, including every North American study they could find that considered achievement or performance data in competitive, cooperative, and/or individualistic structures. The remarkable results: 65 studies found that cooperation promotes higher achievement than competition, 8 showed the reverse, and 36 showed no statistically significant difference. Cooperation promoted higher achievement than independent work in 108 studies, while 6 found the reverse, and 42 found no difference. The superiority of cooperation held for ALL SUBJECT areas, and ALL AGE groups.”

David W. Johnson, et al

“The Effects of Cooperative, Competitive and Individualistic Goal Structures on Achievement

Alfie Kohn suggests that the case for competition is based on a great deal of misinformation. Specifically, he cites four myths that he believes are central to the belief that competition is a positive structure. The four myths are

1. Competition is an unavoidable fact of life, part of “human nature”
2. Competition motivates us to do our best, or in stronger form, we would cease being productive if we didn’t compete.
3. Contests are the best, if not the only way to really have fun.
4. Competition builds character, and that it is good for self-confidence.

In his book, No Contest, the Case Against Competition, Kohn presents evidence and discussion to support his belief that the four assertions are indeed myths and that in fact research indicates that competition has some very high price tags for those that engage in it as a structure or choose competition as a way of interacting with others.

The following comparison may be helpful as you decide your stance on competition.

Competition

Promotes an external locus control
Encourages dependency
Mutually exclusive goal achievement
Product orientation
Either/or thinking (judging)
Poisons relationships
Promotes anxiety
Doesn’t promote self esteem
Less pro-social (less likely to help)
Overall performance degrades
May promote aggression

Cooperation

promotes an internal locus of control
encourages independence
room for everyone to reach goals
process orientation
preference thinking
enhances intimacy/relationships
promotes a sense of safety
raises self esteem
pro-social (generous, benevolent)
overall performance enhanced
less physical stress

