Effective Communication

Communication requires at least two people. It is the responsibility of both the sender and the receiver. Some characteristics of effective communication are discussed below. Think about and use each to the extent it can help you improve communication in your preschool program.

- **Articulation.** This requires that you focus on the issue and say what you intend to say. Don't rely on others to "know what you mean."
- **Active listening.** Listen for the meaning and feeling behind the words of the sender. Repeat to the sender what you understood was said.
- **Sharing.** Communication is a sharing activity and requires both talking and listening.
- **Respect.** Respect for one another and acceptance of differing viewpoints facilitates sharing.
- **Honesty.** Communicating what we really feel is important.
- **Ego out.** When communicating about a problem, it is best to focus on the "what" of the problem and not "who is presenting the idea."

**Responsibility for Communication**

Who has responsibility for communication? Both the sender and the receiver. Watch for the barriers to communication. We often develop habits that prevent good communication from happening.

**Barriers to Effective Communication**

- **Failing to listen.** You do not stop what you are doing and thinking to listen without other preoccupations. At a minimum, wait until the other person is done talking before responding.
- **Listening only with your ears.** Are you hearing the emotions behind the words (fear, anger, unhappiness, joy, hopefulness)?
- **Jumping to conclusions.** You decide what your answer is going to be before the person has finished speaking. You think you know what is going to be said before it is said.
- **Closing your mind.** You are not open to new ideas or thoughts. Your ideas and thoughts are the best. Your mind is made up.
- **Being self-centered.** You start to listen, but something that is said starts you thinking about something else and you do not hear the rest.
- **Judging, criticizing and preaching.** You prejudge based upon what a person says, how he/she is dressed or his/her approach. This judgment often causes a response that is critical and preachy and certainly doesn't help the "two-way" process any.