A Study on Communication and bonding in Parent-Child Relationship

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Abstract
Communication plays a vital role in any relationship. The development and prosperity of a child is directly proportionate to the bonding a child has with his or her parents. The more the parents communicate with their children it will bring about a better personality of the child and their adaptation to the society. The communication between parents and children plays a great role in the performance of the child in his or her career, overall personality development and progress of the child in every aspects of life. The domain of this paper is on the importance of communication and bonding in a parent-child relationship. It emphasizes on characteristics of parental communication that shapes the behavioral responses of a child to varied emotional experiences in different stages of life.

Keywords: Communication, Personality, Performance, parent-child relationship

Introduction
Communication in a family situation can be described as the ability of family members to share their opinions and emotions in diverse ways. This communication varies constantly with time and varied family structures. Initially parenthood was mostly confined to the mother of a child. However, in the case of working women, they choose to return to workforce, as early as possible. This leads to the delegation of responsibilities to other members of the family, and this is where the father has an increased participation in the upbringing of a child. A unique relationship is maintained between a mother and the child and father and the child each having different responsibilities in the development of the child. Adding to this the advancement in technology has created its own impact in the parent-child relationship. Parent-child relationship is one that has to be nurtured with care throughout the life span understanding the complexities lying in it. It is definitely not a complex one but one which needs certain skills and availability of time.
Need of communication in different stages

Any relationship be it social or family depends mainly on two things namely trust and communication. Communication includes listening, emotional understanding, and mutual respect for each other besides transmitting information and feelings. There are two types of communication namely verbal (with words) and non-verbal (includes facial expressions, gestures, paralinguistic elements etc.). It is very vital to use these tools of communication effectively for better functioning of the family. In early days communication was an ongoing process whereas in the postmodern era communication is at the superficial level which is not a good sign. Communication is essential to establish, maintain and build a bonding between the parent and the child. Only through this a parent will be able to identify and cater to the needs of their children in every aspect bringing about betterment in the relationship. But in the current scenario parents fail to communicate mutually and effectively. Non-verbal or body language associated with the words play a significant implication. Anything said with a smile and socially acceptable words is understood by the child easily than harsh words accompanied by a frown. The time and interaction a parent does is valued more than any other precious things available in the world by a child. This communication varies from time to time based on the developmental stages of a child.

Infancy

One important thing an infant needs is communication, interactive engagement and the care it gets from its parents and care givers. This goes a long way in the development of the brain at the early stage. This is where attention is paid to the non-verbal communication cues rather than the verbal parts. Quality time with loving interactions should be the main focus of the parents. The sense of touch and tender kisses ensures safety and is very vital for infants. Infants above the age of 6 months recognize the facial expressions and respond to the warmth shown by the parents and create a bonding and builds resilience. The ability to cry is used to communicate different messages like hunger, wet bottom, need for comfort etc. and this should be met immediately by the elders. The one who spends more time with the kid, can easily make out from the type of cry and the subtle movement, as what is the message the baby is trying to convey. One could see a flurry of development including the baby talks and smiles. A smile, talk and lullabies can be the ways to communicate. They are attracted to bright colors, gestures and social interactions. In the toddler stage they answer simple questions and would also expect a conversation time with their parents or caretakers. Story-
telling can be the best way to engage a kid at this stage and make them do the same to
improve their vocabulary and expressions. One should try to respond to their babies
expressions even when one is not able to understand and this can be the best way to teach
them how to respond to elders at their later stages. Communication done at this stage will
help a kid develop its interpersonal skills along with their reading and writing skills at the
later stage. Kids in turn show affection to special and significant people in their lives.

**Childhood**

This is the stage where a strong foundation is built at the mental level and this is mostly
acquired from the parent’s attitude and the values which they imbibe in the younger ones. A
strong support system in the family is needed for physical, social and emotional development
of the child which will in turn create a positive outcome. An effective communication is
essential to keep a track on the child’s development and has lot more benefits. Open
communication and sharing of emotions helps a child to handle emotional situations
prudently. It promotes the social and academic skills of a child and makes them a confident
and optimistic person. It is an obvious fact that any parent loves their kids; however it is
shown with the quality time one spends with their little ones. At the childhood stage kids
always need their parents around them for interaction. Parents always have their child as their
top priority and this fact should be made evident to the child. Parents should be responsible
and available to attend to the needs of a child. Children at this stage should be controlled in a
calm and mature way to create a positive impact in them. The best way to make them do what
you want is to be with them and spend time with the child from the beginning which will
strengthen the bonding at the later stage. Parents should pay attention to the child’s needs and
put an effort to observe things from their perspective and this will enable us to guide them in
a better way. The communication done should be friendly to create a positive impact on
them. This is the stage where the parents should get involved in the academic activities of the
kid and have knowledge about their friends. Children at this level show interest in sharing
information going on in the school and with their friends. This is where, parents are expected
to listen to them and build trust in the young minds. Every child is born talented in one aspect
or the other. It is the responsibility of the parent to nurture this skill and encourage them to
hone this talent. It is the power of words which will create confidence and try to build
opportunities to improve this skill. Kids should be respected and given freedom to share their
views on any matter as this will give them confidence. This is a crucial stage where children
develop a secure feel with their parents and develops a great bonding with them. It is always advisable to have a healthy bonding with the kid to enable a positive relationship.

**Corporal punishment**

Hitting a child or incorporating corporal punishment leads to anxiety and aggression in the child’s mind. Some parents believe that hitting and abusing the child and later on soothing them with cuddles and kisses would calm them down. But a study shows that parents who adopt physical punishment and believed to buffer the scars by love and warmth actually worsened the situation. Such kids displayed more hostility than the kids who were given corporal punishment and whose emotions were neglected. This is because a kid when administered to physical abuse may feel rejected. Simultaneously when he or she is hardly hit and loved warmly at the same time, it raises confusion in their minds leading to emotional disturbance and anxiety. Children who are brought up in an authoritarian family environment show aggression and wild behavior, but less than that of a child from a family where corporal punishment is executed. They tend to take it as their parents’ rejection. Hence it is advisable that kids should not be administered to corporal punishment be it a mild one or a severe one.

**Adolescence**

A positive parent-child relationship is very essential for an adolescents’ better academic performance including a sound mind and a sound body. This stage of a human being is said to be very crucial and a genuine intention accompanied by a non-judgmental communication is preferable. Adolescence is a period which is characterized by a distinct development in emotional, physical and psychological behavior of an individual. This is a transitional period of a human being between childhood and his adulthood stage. It is the developmental period where parent-child relationship undergoes a lot of changes and triggers a lot of conflict and emotional disturbance. In order to enable a smooth interpersonal communication a positive horizontal relationship should be espoused. Adolescents try to explore new things, wish to take independent decisions and have an identity of their own, which often leads to conflicts especially with their parents. This leads to a shift in the parent child relationship, where a positive approach accompanied by empathizing words from the parents will boost up the morale and confidence of a teen. A corroborative effort is essential on both the ends for a smooth relationship. Adolescence is a phase which expects more independence and liberty to take decisions regarding issues related to oneself. This when granted to a certain extent by the parents increases the exhibition of cognitive skills and the ability to think rationally.
Unhealthy parenting at this stage may lead to psychological illness and retardation in development of an individual. Parents while communicating to children at this stage should try to relate to them in a genuine way, keeping off our aggression, hatred and perversion, lest they become conscious of our attitude and try to sabotage our communication to a certain level. A heartfelt mindful conversation may help them open up and enable a positive communicative relationship.

**Adulthood**

Adulthood is the stage which begins at 20 years of age. This is when stability begins and there is a complete physical, cognitive and emotional development. The physical abilities, muscle strength, cognitive ability and intelligence are at their peak. At this stage the child behaves in way exhibiting a greater level of independence and maturity. They adapt their own style of communicating to their parents and siblings. This at times may lead to misunderstandings between the parent and the child due to communication gap. This gap could be bridged by developing an understanding about the behavior of adult children. Change is constant, inevitable and an important aspect of growth and development. Generally speaking, a parent-child relationship is where the parent has more authority than the child. But this power and authority of the parents disappears at the adult stage. The parent ought to relate to their adult child on topics of common interest and general talks and should not indulge in correcting the child’s behavior or attitude. There is a gradual shift in the parent, where they restrain offering unsolicited advice and move on to asking for suggestions or opinions. At this stage both, the parent and the child ought to develop a friendly relationship, to enable the child to share their emotions and feelings with their parents more openly. This could be possible when the parents are ready to practice active listening skills. The fact that no one's map has yet become the "GPS" that guides the rest of us to our destinations is really true. Sometimes parents feel that they have given all the love and their best possible efforts to bring up their children, but not reciprocated duly. Instead we should assure the adult children that we are there with them in time of need and play a role of a guide, rather than pointing out at their mistakes. It is responsibility of the parents to help them make their best choices, so that they could lead life at peace. They should be responsible for the decisions they take in life. Freedom should be given to them to pursue their passion and dreams.
Means to strengthen parent-child relationship

Parenting is one of the toughest and most fulfilling jobs in the world. It affects the child’s development to a great extent. A healthy environment has a great impact and enables a child to grow to their full potential.

Some measure to fortify could be:

1. Making the child feel loved and secured

   There is nothing called as a perfect family. Parents always opine that what they do is the best for the child. However this need not be true always. It is vital to make the child feel and sense that he or she is loved by the parent. This should be reassured from time to time through our words and actions and will encourage them to depend on the parent for emotional support. Dining together as a whole family makes room for a lot of conversation. Natural stress reliever like, hugging the child is one of the best and essential gesture in providing love and security.

2. Talk to them & Listen to them

   Sharing your childhood struggles and memories will help them connect to you even better. It is always easier to speak and render advice as an adult. But when we listen we give the child a voice and opportunity to speak their thoughts, which will in turn help them to stand for themselves. While interacting with the child it is better to turn off the technology devices that we are constantly connected with.

3. Spend quality time

   It is important to make time for our child however busy we may be. It can be even some household chores which we do together or playing with the kid. In fact playing with the kid makes them feel friendly and cooperative. This connection should be substantial and continuous. Quality one-on-one time spent with the child having a meaningful conversation goes a long way in bonding the relationship. Children should not be pressurized or rush with things for our urgency. Live in the present and savor the moment you spend together and utilize every opportunity to connect with each other.

4. Bed time chat

   Just like dining together, few moments spent before going to bed, has its own benefits. These moments of connection bid the child to come up with the current struggles or
thoughts going on in his mind. Whatever may be, most of the time, a child needs a listener to pour out his thoughts or emotions and not our advice or suggestions. If they happen to share any problems, try to make a follow up and sort it out. By doing so we show our concern, and trust for the child as well. This is one factor which brings the parent and the child closer.

5. **Acknowledge and appreciate**

Acknowledging anybody’s feelings gives them a sense of security and your love and concern for them. The same goes with a parent and a child. When we put in efforts to understand them, we make them feel supported. Appreciating is another quality which will help the child to develop self esteem, and this goes a long way in the progress of the individual. Trust is vital in every relationship, hence develop trust in the child and earn their trust by keeping their confidence. Children need constant encouragement and motivation to exhibit their skill sets.

These qualities will help us lay a better foundation for a parent-child relationship, which can be strengthened as time goes on.

**Conclusion**

Bringing up a child is the most challenging task for any parent. It is like a sculptor chiseling a product, both the parents pay due attention at every stage of the child as they are nurturing a family’s future. Often there arises a friction between parents and children, or amidst the sibling, and this is mostly predominant with adult children. Listening to each other without being judgmental is crucial and essential to realize the fact that everybody has their own perception of things. Any relationship for that matter requires reciprocation of love and efforts from both the end to make the bond stronger and successful. This is even more important in a parent-child relationship and needs a lot of bonding and close moments. A child who has received love and respect from his parents is capable enough to regulate his emotions even in a stressful situation. The parenting style which we adopt plays a vital role in determining the physical and emotional well-being of our children. Hence, parent-child relationship is a unique bond which has to be enjoyed and nurtured. A family is the first university for a child and the bonding it creates is pertinent to lay the foundation for the child’s personality and future.
References


