

# RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

## How well does your family communicate?

*"The best communication happens in families when no one is working at it."*

**Studies have shown that members of strong families communicate differently than members of troubled families.**

In strong families parents and children get comfortable with each other so that important issues are raised and help is asked for free from judgement. Members of troubled families are often critical in their communication and either speak to each other in accusatory ways or they avoid conflict altogether.

Members of strong families don't always reach agreement but they speak directly and honestly with each other without blaming and they often end up agreeing to disagree. They also have processes in place such as regular shared meals that ensure people speak to each other on a regular basis.

Studies have also shown that members of strong families are generally good listeners. They use their ears more than their mouths and they ask questions rather than rely on reading other people's minds. Parents also have a way of engaging children in discussions about interesting, challenging and personal subjects while maintaining privacy of thought.

Strong families also like to laugh. The stronger the family the more likely they are to use humour to maintain a healthy outlook on life. Humour is an important ingredient in communication. It is used to express warmth, reduce tension, get conversations going and help deal with anxiety and difficulties.

The busyness of life can inhibit open family communication. Traditionally, strong families enjoyed spending time together and communication occurred in natural, unforced ways. Today families need to work hard at communicating and don't leave it to chance.

Strong families find a way of carving out time to be with each other. They recognise those opportunities that afford effective communication and they guard these assiduously.

Strong families also use technology to aid communication rather than interfere with it. Mobile phones are used to stay in touch, television offers opportunities for discussion and emails help keep conversations going when people are separated by distance.



## WHAT'S YOUR FAMILY LIKE?

### HOW WELL DOES YOUR FAMILY COMMUNICATE?

1. Do you get together as a family each week so everyone has an opportunity to talk?  
Yes [2] No [0]
2. Is humour a feature of your family?  
Yes [2] No [0]
3. Do most people in your family listen to and take an interest in each other?  
Yes [2] No [0]
4. Do you have effective processes to resolve conflict between siblings such as family meetings?  
Yes [2] No [0]

5. Do children talk openly to you or each other about problems or issues that may bother them?  
Yes [2] No [0]

#### SCORE:

- 10:** Remarkable. Communication is tricky so it is hard to have all bases covered.
- 6-8:** Good stuff. You need to continue to work at it.
- 0-4:** You may need to focus on ways to talk so children will listen and listen so they will talk.



## TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

**To promote open communication in your family:**

1. Make **mealtimes** more than a refuelling pit stop. Sharing a meal provides an opportunity for parents and children to talk, exchange views, swap news and have a laugh or two.
2. Talk with children on **their turf**. Places such as bedrooms and cars can be safe havens for open communication. Identify where your children talk the most and make the most of those places.
3. Talk about the stuff that **children and young people** want to talk about. Find out what interests your children and use that as an entry point to conversations.
4. **Write** it down. Sometimes conversational clams respond best to notes or letters. So if you have something important to say or an issue you want to discuss put pen to paper (or start up the computer) and get it down in writing.

## ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit [www.parentingideas.com.au](http://www.parentingideas.com.au)

## QUOTE

*'Communication is a skill that you can learn. It's like riding a bicycle or typing. If you're willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.'*

BRIAN TRACY