

Thrive update

 **Boulder Valley** School District
Excellence and Equity

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>>Healthy Relationships: Be an "Articulate Listener"

Although we have been talking to each other for literally thousands of years, we often fail to truly connect with what it is we are actually saying to one another. As a psychologist, the one truth I can state with certainty is that when we fail to truly understand one another, our relationships suffer. In my experience, our "communication problems" usually have less to do with what we say to one another and more to do with how we listen to one another. If we can learn to listen as articulately as we speak, I think that we will all see our relationships improve. So as we enter into this New Year, here are five suggestions that will help you to dramatically improve your listening skills and improve the relationships with those around you.

Be actively available. Most people mistakenly assume that their loved ones will come to them if they have something important to talk about. I call this being "passively available." Being "actively available" means taking the initiative to reach out to those around you and invite a discussion. For example, a simple "It looks like something is bothering you, I want you to know that I am here to talk with you" is often enough to open up the lines of communication.

Be willing. Be willing to listen to whatever it is that the person is saying in this moment. This means that we have to be "willing" to experience some uncomfortable, even difficult, feelings in ourselves when we are listening to whatever is being said to us. All too

often we jump into problem solving mode to try to make the uncomfortable feeling go away. When we do this we stop listening. If you can hang in with the uncomfortable feeling, you will be able to hear the whole story.

Be reflective. When you feel you understand an aspect of what someone is saying to you, repeat it back to them using your own words. For example, if someone talks about feeling confused about an important decision, you might simply say "so you are really trying hard right now to decide what is the best solution for you." This simple strategy may feel a bit awkward, but it is an effective way of letting the person know you are listening to them. It also provides them with the opportunity to correct you if they feel you are missing the point.

Be respectful. Respect their perspective—you don't have to agree with it, but you can try and place yourself in their shoes. Simply stating that you can imagine how they might be feeling about a particular issue goes a long way.

Be thankful and encouraging. Thank them for trusting you enough to open up to you. This really lets them know that you value this type of communication. Also convey to them your belief in their ability to get through the situation. Often times this is exactly what the person wants and needs to hear.

by **Dr. Trevor Graham**
local psychologist
and member of Boulder
Psychological Services

>> From Parent to Parent

We are All Gatekeepers in Keeping Our Children Safe

On September 21, 2004, I sustained an unfathomable shock that irrevocably broke my heart and shattered my life. My wonderful, precious, middle son, whom I adored with every fiber of my being, took his own life at the age of 23. To this day, my husband and I, our large extended family, and untold numbers of friends in the diverse communities that our son traversed, are still reeling in anguish.

Gabe graduated from the University of Colorado on a full athletic football scholarship playing offensive and defensive lineman for the Buffs. When he walked into a room people stared. He was a giant, but not just in size. There was no doubt among those that were privileged to have known him, that he was also a giant in heart, soul, and thought.

How could this terrible tragedy have happened? Could it have been prevented? Is it possible that there were signs of despondency that went unrecognized by all the gatekeepers in his life? Were we all blind...or ignorant...or just too busy to notice? Today I can only Monday morning quarterback, because if I knew then what I know now, my son would be here. Yes, I believe this.

We are all part of a community that is rocked to the core because some of our children and adults have felt so hopeless that they have ended their own lives. This community is grieving. As gatekeepers, what can we learn to save the lives of others?

To answer this question, The Boulder County Suicide Prevention Coalition, now called HOPE Coalition of Boulder County, was formed in 2005 with funding from the Gary Barnett Foundation. Concerned citizens from Boulder Valley

School District, University of Colorado, Parent Engagement Network, Boulder County agencies, Colie's Closet, and parents formed the Coalition almost overnight. As committed citizens, we must work together, reach out, and understand the stressors in today's society that have triggered an epidemic of depression. We need to instill in all the people of our community that they can ask for help without fear of shame and we want to give them the necessary resources to do it. With proper attention and intervention, lives can be saved. As teachers, coaches, and most importantly, parents, we are all our children's gatekeepers.

On Thursday morning, February 26, 2009, HOPE Coalition of Boulder County will hold its annual Gatekeepers Event for depression awareness and suicide prevention. All parents are welcome to attend. Keynote Speaker Dr. Jon Richard, a noted licensed psychologist and expert in the field of suicide prevention, will speak about risk assessment, intervention, and prevention. There will be a Continental breakfast, networking, interactive discussions, a panel of experts for high-risk groups, action planning, and resources.

For more information and to register in advance for this free event, visit the HOPE Coalition website at:

www.hopecoalitionboulder.org

Date: Thursday, February 26, 2009

Time: 8-noon

**Place: First Congregational Church
1128 Pine Street, Boulder**

by Bonnee Oderberg

>> "When Things Get Crazy with Your Teen"

Parents often ask me to recommend books on teenagers. I am usually reluctant as most books that I've read have elements that are contrary to my training and experience. There's one author who is an exception to that rule—Dr. Michael Bradley.

Several years ago he wrote the book "Yes, Your Teen is Crazy!: Loving Your Kid Without Losing Your Mind." In this award-winning book, Dr. Bradley helps parents understand the relationship of new information on teen brain development and its relationship to teen behavior. He offers sensible and effective parenting strategies to deal with issues like substance abuse, anger, and sexual behavior. In his newly released book entitled "When Things Get Crazy with Your Teen: The Why, the How, and What

to do Now," Dr. Bradley goes deeper into specific issues including body-image, behavioral issues, school challenges, health issues, socialization and more. In addition, he offers a wealth of effective parenting strategies to address these issues.

Dr. Bradley will be in Boulder the last weekend in February as part of a combined fundraiser for two local nonprofits: September High School (SeptemberSchool.org), the oldest independent high school in Boulder County, and the Boulder Counseling Cooperative (BoulderCounseling.org), a new nonprofit which provides low cost counseling services for middle and lower income individuals and families.

From 6-9 p.m. Friday evening, Feb. 27, there will be a gala reception followed by

a presentation by Dr. Bradley based on his new book at the Unity Church, 2855 Folsom Street in Boulder. Tickets are \$35 in advance or \$45 at the door. **Mention "Thrive update" and get \$10 off each ticket.**

On Saturday morning, Feb. 28, from 10 a.m.-noon, Dr. Bradley will provide an interactive workshop for parents entitled "For Crazy Parents of Crazy Teens: Solving Problems While Loving Your Child" at September High School, 1902 Walnut Street in Boulder. Tickets are \$45 in advance and \$60 at the door.

For ticket information, call Alexis at September School at 303-443-9933 or email alexis@septemberschool.org.

by Dr. Jan Hittelman
Licensed Psychologist

>> Warning Signs of Depression

Warning signs of Depression

- Sad or irritable mood
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Large changes in appetite or weight
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Slow or agitated movement
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent thoughts of death or suicide

Additional Warning Signs Specific to Adolescents

- Increased irritability, anger, hostility
- Frequent absences from school or poor school performance
- Lack of interest in spending time with friends or family
- Talk of or efforts to run away from home
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Reckless behavior
- Neglect of clothes and appearance

Adolescent Risk Factors

- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Previous suicide attempts
- Suicide completion by friends
- Availability of a gun
- Recent traumatic event
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Family history of depression and or substance abuse
- Difficulties in dealing with sexual orientation
- Minority status
- STRESS!!!

www.hopecoalitionboulder.org/content/view/full/111

Q&A with Dr. J

Q: My son is 9 years old. He is quite competitive, yet shy and sensitive in many ways. He gets angry when I help him with his homework or correct his mistakes. I fear he is not getting a good education because of this "dance" we do around trying to help him vs. trying not to upset him or make him feel as if we are criticizing him on his mistakes. So, any advice how to handle this?

~Elementary Mom

A: Homework battles are more common than you may think. It is important to realize that the family conflicts that result from this may be more costly than the benefits. Consider empowering your son by discussing these challenges with him at a more positive moment (not in the heat of the homework battle). Let him know that you want to support him with his work and that you're interested in hearing what he thinks would be more effective than what you're doing now. For example, offering your help only when he asks for it. Try to find some room for compromise and agree to re-evaluate the situation together after a week or so of trying out the new system. I often encourage parents to make this shift

before middle school. This is the right time to help your child become more independent and responsible for his schoolwork. Otherwise these battles will likely increase.

Q: What objective evidence is there that absolute prohibitions against alcohol in the home reduce teenage drinking vs. a European approach of drinking moderate amounts, such as wine at dinner? Secondly, how do researchers reliably measure rates of teenage drinking? Don't most substance abusers lie about their consumption, even to themselves?

~Concerned Dad

A: Surveys of this kind generally rely on self-report. They are typically anonymous, which tends to increase the respondents' honesty. That said there is no guarantee that they will be honest, as you point out. Still, the results both in the U.S. and Europe consistently reflect disturbing rates of alcohol use by adolescents.

In terms of European drinking patterns, there has been increasing concern in European nations regarding the dangers of alcohol consumption. According to a recent study, "while 266 million adults drink alcohol at relatively lower

risk levels, over 58 million adults (15 percent) drink more than this (i.e. five or more drinks at one time), including 20 million (6 percent) drinking at even more harmful levels. According to a recent report, 23 million Europeans (5 percent of men, 1 percent of women) are dependent on alcohol" (Anderson, P, and Baumberg, B. 2006. Alcohol in Europe. A public health perspective).

The truth is that we would all be better off if we refrained from alcohol use altogether.

While there are reports that moderate alcohol consumption provides some health benefits, using that time to exercise would be far healthier. The best thing we can do for our children is model abstinence where drinking is concerned.

Do you have a question?

Submit your questions directly by:

Phone: 720-217-3270

Fax: 720-381-6089

Email: Jan.Hittelman@gmail.com

Post: 1527 Pine Street, Boulder 80302

by Dr. Jan Hittelman
Licensed Psychologist

>> Cultivating Healthy Parent-Child Relationships

Healthy parent-child relationships are the foundation for successful children. We tend to parent either the way we were parented or the opposite. So, while we may strive to have healthy relationships with our children, our experiences or lack of knowledge may hold us back.

Parent educators talk about three different styles of parenting, generically referred to as authoritarian, permissive and authoritative. Love and Logic refers to these styles as drill sergeant, helicopter and consultant.

Authoritarian, or drill sergeant, parents command and direct the lives of children. They set rigid boundaries, always try to be in control, and exert control over their children. The message they send is, "I know what's best for you, so listen to me and do what I say."

Permissive, or helicopter, parents hover and rescue their children when they make mistakes. They set few, if any, boundaries and give most of the control to their children. The message they send is, "You don't really need to be responsible. If you make a mistake, I will rescue you."

Authoritative, or consultant, parents provide guidance, support and direction. They set basic boundaries that evolve as kids mature and share control by giving kids as much control as they can handle. The message they send is, "You need to figure things out and learn to think for yourself, because the quality of your life will depend upon your thinking and decision-making."

We can get away with the drill sergeant or helicopter style when kids are young. What happens with these two styles is that it conditions a child to listen to a voice outside of their own. When that voice is the parent's or the teacher's, we think it works. When our kids become teens, if they have been conditioned to listen to an external voice, they will continue to do so - this time that voice will be their peers.

It takes knowledge and practice to learn and implement a new style. The authoritative, or consultant, style is usually more difficult for parents who were not raised that way themselves. The power in this style is in raising kids who develop an

inner guide that helps them think through problems. When these kids become teenagers and a peer suggests something, they will run it through their internal filter and ask, "How this will work for me?" This leaves them much less vulnerable to peer pressure.

Using an authoritative parenting style doesn't guarantee that your child will always make good decisions. But the good news is that he or she will have an opportunity to learn from the consequences of their decisions.

A good website on parenting styles is www.parentingstyles.co.uk/home.htm. Information on local parenting classes that teach these concepts can be found at www.FoothillsParentingClasses.com.

For a delightful story of a consultant parent of a 2 1/2 year old who wanted to go out in the snow with just a diaper and snow boots, read "Logical Consequences Taught By Snow" at http://www.realparenting.net/early_childhood.html.

by Stephanie Bryan, LCSW, CAD III
Clinical Social Worker and Parent Coach
www.REALparenting.net

>> SPOTLIGHT ON... Community Access Mentoring a.k.a. Cool Afterschool Moves (CAM)

Dedicated to the cause of "Guiding, empowering and inspiring youth by providing school-based mentoring and afterschool program connections," Community Access Mentoring (CAM) is a fairly new program in BVSD that is also fondly referred to as "Cool Afterschool Moves."

Coordinated by Patti Ashley, Ph.D., CAM seeks to match up middle school students with mentors (which CAM calls "Access Coaches") who can build an effective relationship with the student and help him or her to access suitable afterschool programs. It is this combination of traditional mentoring with the added support of afterschool programs that makes CAM unique.

Studies have shown that a high-quality mentoring relationship can lead to benefits such as improved academic achievement, self-esteem, social skills and career development. Mentoring has also been shown to reduce substance use and abuse, academic failure, and delinquency. Participation in afterschool programs has similarly been shown to reduce students' involvement in crimes, sexual activity and substance abuse,

at-risk behaviors which typically spike during the hours of 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

So a program like CAM which combines mentoring with afterschool programs has the potential to be an especially positive influence in a young person's life.

"We have a lot of students who would like to be matched with mentors through CAM," said Dr. Ashley, "but we need more adult volunteers to meet the demand."

In fact, a Jan. 15 news release from "Mentors Matter" noted that the U.S. has a serious "mentoring gap," with nearly 15,000,000 young people in need of mentors. BVSD's Community Access Mentoring (CAM) program is working tirelessly to fill that gap.

If you or someone you know would like to volunteer one hour or more a week to mentor a student, please contact the CAM office at 720-203-6844 or by email to: patti.ashley@bvsd.org.

Thriveupdate for BVSD Parents

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Look for us on the web!

www.bvsd.org

>> Calendar of Classes & Events

FEBRUARY 2009

2/5: **Presentation: "Friendships and Gifted Students"**

Annette Sheely. Thursday, Feb 5. 7-8:30 p.m.

Douglass Elementary, 840 75th Street, Boulder.

Presented by Boulder Valley Gifted and Talented (BVGT).

FREE. Donations accepted. For details, visit www.bvgt.org

RSVP to: programming@bvgt.org

2/6 & 7: **Give Kids a Smile Day**

Friday, Feb. 6. 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Dental Aid, 4155 Darley,
Suite C, Boulder. 303 499 7072

Saturday, Feb 7. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Children's Clinic, 877 South
Boulder Road, Louisville. 303 665 8228.

FREE dental treatment and education for children without
health insurance. Appointments must be scheduled in
advance by calling one of the clinics.

2/7: **Love and Logic Early Childhood Parenting Made Fun** (for parents of children up to age 6)

(Starts) Saturdays, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28, March 7 (five sessions).

10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Parenting Place, 1235 Pine, #A, Boulder.

For details contact the instructor, Sheryl Schwabe,
at 303 520 6803 or sschwabe@comcast.net.

2/8: **Resources for Couples: Healthy Communication - Elizabeth Matthews, LPC**

Sundays. 1-2:30 p.m. Trinity Lutheran Church, 2200 Broadway,
Boulder (NE Corner Broadway & Pine).

For more info: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com.

2/10: **From Entitlement to Eligibility - Transition to Adulthood**

Tuesday, Feb. 10. 6-8 p.m. BVSD Ed Center; 6500 Arapahoe.

A presentation and resource fair for parents of children with
disabilities.

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

- 2/10: Love and Logic Early Childhood Parenting Made Fun**
(for parents of children up to age 6)
(Starts) Tuesdays, Feb. 10, 17, 24, March 3, 10 (five sessions) 9:15-11:30 a.m. 1530 55th Street, Boulder.
For details contact the instructor Stephanie Bryan at stephanie@REALparenting.net or 303 397 0646.
- 2/11: Love and Logic Early Childhood Parenting Made Fun**
(for parents of children up to age 6)
(Starts) Wednesdays, Feb. 11, 18, 25, March 4, 11 (five sessions) 6-8:30 p.m., Louisville Recreation Center,
900 Via Appia, Louisville. For details contact the instructor Sheryl Schwabe at 303 520 6803 or
sschwabe@comcast.net
- 2/12: Don't Take It Personally - A Parent Engagement Network
Community Conversation featuring John Davis**
Thursday morning, Feb. 12. 9-11 a.m. BVSD Conference Center and Thursday evening, Feb 12. 7-9 p.m.
Angevine Middle School.
A conversation on surviving adolescence.
- 2/12: Becoming A Love and Logic Parent**
(Starts) Thursdays, Feb. 12, 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19 (six sessions) 6:30-9:00 p.m.
Mesa Elementary School, 1575 Lehigh, Boulder
For details contact the instructor Cyndi Goldfarb at 303 494 8373 or cyn@indra.com
- 2/15: Resources for Couples: Effective Co-Parenting - Marcela Ot'alora G., LPC**
Sundays 1-2:30 p.m. Trinity Lutheran Church,
2200 Broadway, Boulder (NE Corner Broadway & Pine).
For more info: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com
- 2/22: Resources for Couples: Communicating with Difficult Ex-Spouses - Jamie Lau**
Sundays 1-2:30 p.m. Trinity Lutheran Church,
2200 Broadway, Boulder (NE Corner Broadway & Pine).
For more info: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com.
- 2/26: Gatekeeper's Keys: Compassion, Courage, Critical Information**
Thursday, Feb, 26, 8 a.m.-noon, The First Congregational Church, 1128 Pine Street, Boulder.
Register at www.hopecoalitionboulder.org. For info contact: valstone2@hotmail.com.
FREE half day training session on depression awareness and suicide prevention.
- A WEEKEND WITH DR. MICHAEL BRADLEY (Author of "Yes! Your Teen is Crazy!")**
- 2/27: An Evening with Michael Bradley: "When Things Get Crazy with Your Teen:
The Why, the How, and What to do NOW!" (reception, presentation & silent auction)**
(Part 1) Friday, Feb. 27, 6-9 p.m. Unity Church, 2855 Folsom St., Boulder.
Tickets are \$35 in advance and \$45 at the door.
Mention "Thrive update" and get \$10 off each ticket.
For more information please call Alexis at 303 443 9933 or email alexis@septemberschool.org.
- 2/28: Interactive Workshop with Michael Bradley: "For Crazy Parents of Crazy Teens:
Solving Problems While Loving Your Child"**
(Part 2) Saturday, Feb. 28, 10-noon September High School, 1902 Walnut St., Boulder
Tickets are \$45 in advance and \$60 at the door.
For more information, please call 303 443 9933 or email alexis@septemberschool.org.

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

MARCH 2009

- 3/1: **Helping Your Child Transition Through School** - Linda Cain, MSeD, Harmony Barrett Isaacs, LPC, Stuart Marshall, LPC
Sundays. 1-2:30 p.m. Trinity Lutheran Church, 2200 Broadway, Boulder (NE corner Broadway & Pine).
For more info: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com
- 3/1: **Love and Logic - Early Childhood Parenting Made Fun!**
(for parents of children up to age 6)
(Starts) Sundays, March 1, 8 and 15 (three sessions). 1-5 p.m. Dream Makers Preschool.
For details contact the instructor Cyndi Goldfarb @ 303 494 8373 or cyn@indra.com
- 3/4: **Presentation: "Perfectionism and Gifted Students"** - Steve Hass
Wednesday, March 4. 7-8:30 p.m. BVSD Ed Center, 6500 Arapahoe, Boulder.
Presented by BoulderValley Gifted and Talented (BVGT). FREE. Donations accepted.
For details visit: www.bvgt.org. RSVP to: programming@bvgt.org
- 3/8: **Job Transitions - Panel Presentation**
Sundays. 1-2:30 p.m. Trinity Lutheran Church. 2200 Broadway, Boulder (NE Corner Broadway & Pine).
For more info: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com
- 3/11: **Building Bridges - Effective Ways to Communicate and Connect with Your Kids - A Parent Engagement Network Community Conversation featuring Michael Vladeck**
Wednesday, March 11. 9-11 a.m. Lafayette Library, 775 W. Baseline, Lafayette.
- 3/15: **Caring for our Elder Parents** - Karen Wilding, LCSW
Sundays. 1-2:30 p.m.. Trinity Lutheran Church, 2200 Broadway, Boulder (NE Corner Broadway & Pine).
For more info: BoulderPsychologicalServices.com.

To submit items for the calendar contact:

Leisha Conners Bauer at iconnersbauer@bouldercounty.org.