

Questions for Group Discussion on Communication

Misunderstandings

1. What, in your experience, causes the most misunderstandings between people and why?
2. How do you handle your own anger? That of others which is directed toward you? How do you think you could deal with it better?
3. What are some constructive ways not given in the book for "blowing off steam"?

Fighting Dirty

1. What are some other types of "lethal weapons" and "psychological warfare" people use when "fighting dirty" than those given in this chapter?
2. Are there people you know who seem to like to fight or argue? If so, why do you think they behave that way?
3. When someone tries to pick a fight or start an argument with you, what do you think is the best way to deal with them? How do you actually respond?

Getting Closer

1. Why are people often willing to discuss opinions and ideas but not feelings?
2. What feelings do you find it easiest to talk about? most difficult? Why?
3. Give at least five examples from your own experiences of the differences between being "tactful" and being dishonest?
4. How, *specifically*, can you tell when someone is or is not *really* listening to you? How do you react when you are really listening to someone?
5. When do you think it is better to be silent rather than criticize? When do you think it is necessary to criticize, and what is the best way to go about it?

Unfair fighting happens when you attack the other person using sarcasm and exaggerated generalizations such as, "you *always*," and "you *never*." To fight unfairly is generally to attribute bad faith or ill will to the other person: "You don't like me; you've never liked me; you never let me go out." These are generalizations that block any effective dialogue and also lead the dialogue astray from the real issue.

Sarcasm and name-calling are equally unhelpful. Both are bad ways to communicate and unfair ways to fight or to try to resolve conflict.

Fair fighting, on the other hand, happens when you argue for your point with some degree of consistency, reasonableness, and, yes, courtesy.

What are some rules to keep in mind for fighting fair with parents, or anyone else?

First, always remember that the relationship is much more important than any particular issue. Our love relationship as persons has to be put first. What we're seeking here is some sort of agreement, compromise, or understanding. Understanding the other's point of view is more

important than winning an argument. Even if we don't get our way on this particular occasion, at least we understand where our parents are coming from, or where the other party is coming from. That way we have a better appreciation for the other.

Second, respect the other person as a person who has his or her own opinion. What you're trying to do is convince the other person or persuade the other person. You're not trying to browbeat or blackmail him or her.

Third, don't use sarcasm, name-calling, threats, fear, anger, or threatened disobedience as weapons. These never do any good at all; they only damage the relationship.

Fourth, it's useful to remember (especially for teens) that parents are doing the best they know how to be good parents, and most parents would like to say yes rather than no. It would be easier to say yes rather than no to a lot of things. But it is the parents' care for the welfare of their children that causes them to have to lay down the law. Be aware that the parent who never says no is saying, "I don't care for you." That's very important.