



“Good” communication involves our ability to be authentic, take responsibility for our experiences in life and stay in our pre-frontal cortex AND to communicate in such a way that increases the odds that the receiver will be able to be more authentic, take responsibility for their experiences in life and stay in their pre-frontal cortex.

Tips on how to keep your child from falling back into their reptilian brain (and yourself):

1. “I” messages. Take responsibility for your own experience.
2. Remember that most communication is non-verbal (kids and adults)- what is your child’s behavior saying?
3. Children set us up to feel how they feel.
4. Be authentic. When you say something that is not congruent with your actions or body language, children get really confused and learn not to trust themselves.
5. Separate out personhood from behavior. “Johnny, you are a great kid and it is not ok to talk to me that way” (imp to use the word AND instead of BUT)
6. No labels. Name calling/labels is a way to not take responsibility and deal with your own feelings.
7. No sarcasm- sarcasm always has hidden messages.
8. Get curious about your child’s experiences. Don’t deny his/her/their experience. Staying in a state of curiosity activates our prefrontal cortex and helps us not get stuck in reptilian brain.
9. Empathy- put yourself in their shoes.
10. Ask permission. Do not just launch into communicating with your child about hard stuff.

When your child is telling you something that is emotionally important to him/her/them, make sure to listen with your full attention. Listen and then let him/her/them know what his/her/their story was. Once a child’s experience is heard and he/she/they are allowed to experience it, the behavior often changes. If you do not get it, he/she/they will often turn it up a notch.

1. Reflect back on your child’s experience. What you actually heard. Not your opinion about it or what to do about it.
2. Did I get it?
3. Can I share with you how I feel about that?
11. Speak in terms of what is most meaningful/inspiring to your child.
12. Don’t emotionally or physically overwhelm your child. Learn the art of self-regulating.