



# #LIBERTYSTRONG

Newsletter from your Clinical Team

## In this issue:

- Building Social Skills
- Fairfax County Resources
- Coloring Sheet
- Talking to Your Teenager
- Mindful Moment
- Is it Bullying?
- Resources
- Journaling Prompts for February

## How are we doing and what would you like to see in the Clinical Newsletter?

We want to connect with you! Please let Angie Huber know what you would like to see in the newsletter. We will do our best to meet your request. Send any requests to [aahuber@fcps.edu](mailto:aahuber@fcps.edu).

## Building Social Skills

By: Angie Huber, Licensed Liberty School Social Worker,

Many of our students are working to build social skills. It is part of growing up. It can be particularly hard for a person with Autism Disorder to build social skills, as they have more difficulty reading the situation, learning how to connect, and often feel uncomfortable connecting. Social skills are important for building relationships, learning, and having more meaningful connections for all students.

Social skills impact a person's overall wellbeing. They involve learning play skills, conversational skills, managing and understanding emotions, and problem solving skill development. Having a good understanding of these areas of development help children to know how to act and respond in numerous situations, and in turn, relationships can develop and grow. Additional interests and skill development occur after or while learning to master social skill development. A child's mental health is often impacted by social skill development success in that they may experience negative symptoms if they are struggling socially. All of the unintended consequences due to struggling social skills cause extreme stress on an individual.

Reading nonverbal cues and messaging can be a huge barrier to successfully communicating. Nonverbal communication (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, body language) is much harder to understand because it is more subtle, often potentially has various meanings, and less obvious.

Sarcasm and figurative language (go jump in a lake) also makes communicating more difficult. These interactions are not meant to be taken literally, which can be very challenging for someone who approaches conversations with rigid thinking. As a result, confusion sets in and it produces barriers to comprehend what is being communicated.

In order to become successful at social skill development, some strategies are helpful. These are praise, practice with role plays and talking through situations occurring to help someone gain more understating to plan how to respond next time and/or to continue conversations.

How to recognize poor social skills.

- Someone who talks to much, not listening to others
- Someone who takes conversations literally, does not pick up on nonverbals
- Someone who shares information inappropriately repeatedly
- Someone who withdraws from others or becomes aggressive around others
- Someone who takes metaphorical sayings literally, like "I'm so mad I could scream"

Cont. pg 4

Words are powerful.  
They have the ability to  
create a moment and  
the strength to destroy it.

## Fairfax County Resources:

### Parent Support Line:

DFS parent support line, parent cafes and parenting classes ([link](#))

### Autism Resources in Fairfax County ([link](#))

Financial support, social skills groups, respite, rehabilitation, employment, waivers, support groups

### Parent Support Groups:

A Parent Support Group is a **place where you can come to talk about your experiences and gain feedback** without being judged or criticized. The group can help you to develop positive parenting solutions in a respectful environment.

NOVA Educational Resources ([many groups for parents of children with disabilities](#))

Juvenile Court ([free and every Tuesday](#))

Healthy Minds Fairfax ([formal and informal groups](#))

Stress Relief



is for

awesome

# How do I communicate with my teenager??

By: Angie Huber, Licensed Liberty School Social Worker,

I don't know about you, but I feel like my teenagers are constantly pushing my buttons and pushing boundaries. They are not bad kids but they really like to challenge me. I am not always up for it, and if I am honest, I sometimes feel over my limit and struggle to not become upset. So what are the best ways to try to communicate with a teenager? Clearly, I am not perfect, but I have seen research as to expectations and guidance that may help us all as we struggle through this developmental stage with our teens. I will attempt to share these tips here.

Our teens are trying to become more independent and to show us that they are more independent, but it makes for complicated parenting, especially when they are making bigger decisions about things that have real consequences and/or are going to impact their future. Sometimes these decisions may involve impulsive decision making and/or risk taking behaviors. Upon attempting to talk to your teen and helping to guide and direct their path, we often see pushback and emotional reactions due to their lack of emotional skill development at the time and because they are trying to be independent. Staying close to them is not easy, as they are not often very gracious and can be rejecting of any parental interference. On the other hand, they are an open book to their friends and social media influences, which can play a negative major factor. Take a deep breath! We are in it together!

Tips for Navigating this Terrain: ( Child Mind Institute)

**1. Listen.** If you are curious about what's going on in your teen's life, asking direct questions might not be as effective as simply sitting back and listening. Kids are more likely to be open with their parents if they don't feel pressured to share information. Remember even an offhand comment about something that happened during the day is her way of reaching out, and you're likely to hear more if you stay open and interested — but not prying. **(I find that my teens talk more when they are doing something else at the same time (driving, cooking, playing a game)).**

**2. Validate their feelings.** It is often our tendency to try to solve problems for our kids, or [downplay their disappointments](#). But saying something like "She wasn't right for you anyway" after a romantic disappointment can feel dismissive. Instead, show kids that you understand and empathize by reflecting the comment back: "Wow, that does sound difficult."

**3. Show trust.** Teens want to be taken seriously, especially by their parents. Look for ways to show that you trust your teen. Asking him for a favor shows that you rely on him. Volunteering a privilege shows that you think he can handle it. Letting your kid know you have faith in him will [boost his confidence](#) and make him more likely to rise to the occasion.

**4. Don't be a dictator.** You still get to set the rules, but be ready to explain them. While pushing the boundaries is natural for teenagers, hearing your thoughtful explanation about why parties on school nights aren't allowed will make the rule seem more reasonable.

**5. Give praise.** Parents tend to [praise](#) children more when they are younger, but adolescents need the self-esteem boost just as much. Teenagers might act like they're too cool to care about what their parents think, but the truth is they still want your approval. Also looking for opportunities to be positive and encouraging is good for the relationship, especially when it is feeling strained.

**6. Control your emotions.** It's easy for your temper to flare when your teen is being rude, but [don't respond in kind](#). Remember that you're the adult and he is less able to control his emotions or think logically when he's upset. Count to ten or take some deep breaths before responding. If you're both too upset to talk, hit pause until you've had a chance to calm down.

**7. Do things together.** Talking isn't the only way to communicate, and during these years it's great if you can spend time doing things you both enjoy, whether it's cooking or hiking or going to the movies, without talking about anything personal. It's important for kids to know that they can be in proximity to you, and share positive experiences, without having to worry that you will pop intrusive questions or call them on the carpet for something.

**8. Share regular meals.** Sitting down to [eat a meal together as a family](#) is another great way to stay close. Dinner conversations give every member of the family a chance to check in and talk casually about sports or television or politics. Kids who feel comfortable talking to parents about everyday things are likely to be more open when harder things come up, too. One rule: no phones allowed.

**9. Be observant.** It's normal for kids to go through some changes as they mature, but pay attention if you notice changes to her mood, behavior, energy level, or appetite. Likewise, take note if he stops wanting to do things that used to make him happy, or if you notice him isolating himself. If you see a change in your teen's daily ability to function, ask her about it and be supportive (without being judgmental). She may need your help and it could be a sign she needs to talk to a mental health professional.



# 12 Home Activities that Build Social Emotional Skills

www.thepathway2success.com

Pathway  
2 SUCCESS

Play board games and sports



Go on a mindful walk outside



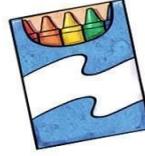
Write in a journal or diary



Practice coping skills, like mindful breathing



Read picture books



Practice mindful coloring

Talk about characters' feelings in a movie



Start an acts of kindness challenge



Organize an area of the house together



Write a self-compliment list



Use conversation starters to share ideas



Play games like "I Spy" and "Simon Says"

Clipart by Kate Hadfield & Sarah Pecorino

## Social Skills (cont. from pg 1)

There are some social skills that your child should master. These are listening to others, following directions/ rules, ignoring distractions, knowing how to ask for help, taking turns when talking to others, getting along with others, and remaining calm when expected.

Ways to Improve Social Skills: (try modeling for your teen)

- ⇒ Find ways to talk to people who you see, as opposed to using one word answers
- ⇒ Ask open ended questions to gain more insight (questions that would not have a yes/no answer). Listen to what they are saying and show interest with nonverbal messaging.
- ⇒ Take time to watch nonverbal skills and try to notice what skills are more engaging and which ones are not helpful. Decide if you would like to try some in your conversations
- ⇒ Practice keeping eye contact with others while communicating
- ⇒ Offer compliments freely and often to those around you
- ⇒ Keep up with current events to give you topics to talk about, avoid controversial topics
- ⇒ Find others, who have similar interests, to engage with socially and get to know them individually

Your students can check out Ms. Huber's google office to see many cool things to do, learn about or to use to cope!



# VIRTUAL ZEN DEN

[Sounds and Music](#)

[Meditation and Grounding Exercises](#)

[Visual Relaxation](#)

[Live Animal Cams](#)

[Yoga](#)

[Something Interesting](#)

[Pixar Short Film: La Luna](#)

[Pixar Short Film: Piper](#)

[Pixar Short Film: Day and Night](#)

[Pixar Short Film: Party Cloudy](#)

[Art and Creativity](#)

[Games and Puzzles](#)

## is it BULLYING?

When someone says or does something *unintentionally* hurtful and they do it once, that's  
**RUDE.**

When someone says or does something *intentionally* hurtful and they do it once, that's  
**MEAN.**

When someone says or does something *intentionally* hurtful and they *keep doing it*—even when you tell them to stop or show them that you're upset—that's  
**BULLYING.**

Bullying Basics, Trudy Ludwig

CAREERCLIFF.COM

## IMPROVE SOCIAL SKILLS

- Listen to people
- Be interested in people's stories
- Perform better in 1-on-1 conversations or in a large crowd
- Don't be too negative or ironic and don't complain
- Remember people's stories
- Remember people's names
- Don't fill every gap with talking
- Follow Up
- Practice maintaining eye contact
- Observe your coworkers' social skills
- Start in small ways
- Ask open-ended questions



sources: indeed.com; inc.com

**The PARENT RESOURCE CENTER offers numerous webinar opportunities throughout the year.**

## **Welcome to the FCPS Parent Resource Center**

[Our flight staff](#) is available by phone [703-204-3941](tel:703-204-3941) or email [prc@fcps.edu](mailto:prc@fcps.edu). We're here to help.

Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services  
2334 Gallows Road, Room 105  
Dunn Loring, Virginia 22027

We offer a welcoming and engaging environment for families, educators, and community members. We provide access to resources to support the success of all students, including those with learning challenges, special needs, and disabilities.

### 2021-2022 SY Hours:

The Parent Resource Center is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

In-person consultations are by appointment only. Please call in advance to make an appointment. Virtual Consultations are still available. Please call [703-204-3941](tel:703-204-3941) or email [prc@fcps.edu](mailto:prc@fcps.edu) for an appointment.

- Appointments are not necessary to browse the library and check out resources.
- You can borrow materials without an appointment.
- Contactless pickup is also available upon request.
- Please contact the PRC if you would like materials sent to your child's school or your FCPS office.

All visitors whether vaccinated or not must wear a mask.

## **Preparing for the Unexpected:**

### **Challenges of the Military Family**

Did you know military-connected students experience different "seasons" as they navigate their school years?

Using tools from her book, "Seasons of My Military Student," Stacy Allsbrook-Huisman will offer relevant tips and strategies for managing new challenges.

Highlights include:

- What makes a school "military-friendly"?
- How can parents help schools understand the challenges of their military-connected students?
- The history of "military-friendly" in the United States and origin of the Purple Star Schools.
- What does being a Purple Star School really mean to military families?

Moving this summer? Get started on the Seasons of Leaving  
Join Stacy Allsbrook-Huisman for our third of a 4-part series supporting military-connected families.

February 25, 2022 10 - 11:30 a.m.

[Register for Preparing for the Unexpected: Challenges of the Military Family](#)

For more social-emotional resources and lessons please visit the LS Clinical Team's website (see the link below works best in Google Chrome):

<https://sites.google.com/view/liberty-ms-clinical-team/mental-wellness-topics>

\*\*some new videos added\*\*\*

## Try out this social skills Bingo with your Teen!

S	P	C	G	S
Pays Attention	Standoffish	Regulate Voice	Sharing	Sports
Social Awareness	<b>Acting Bored</b>	Look at People when Talking	Showing Interest in Others	Traveling
Respond not React	Fault Finding	<b>Free!</b>	Giving and Receiving a Compliment	Dating
Trusting	<b>Poor Sport</b>	<b>Be Real</b>	Setting Boundaries	Hanging Out with Friends
Interpreting Social Cues	<b>Sulking</b>	Open-Ended Questions	Respecting Personal Space	Volunteer

### Try these activities for your student!

⇒ Liberty Middle School Afterschool Program

<https://libertyms.fcps.edu/activities/after-school-program>

⇒ Fairfax County Park Authority Programs

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes>

### Resources:

If you or someone you care about is in crisis, please call [911](tel:911) or access one of the mental health resources below:

- ⇒ *Reach out to a trusted adult (parent, counselor, teacher, coach, etc.); <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk>*
- ⇒ *Text NEEDHELP to 85511 for the [Crisis Link](#) Hotline at or call them at 703-527-4077*
- ⇒ *Chat online with a specialist at [CrisisChat.org](#) or [ImAlive.org](#)*
- ⇒ *Call an emergency mental health center at 703 573-5679 (Merrifield Center), 703-536-2000 (Dominion Hospital), or 703-289-7560 (INOVA emergency services)*
- ⇒ *CR2 – 844-627-4747*
- ⇒ *Go to the nearest emergency room at your local hospital*

**Call 911**

Counseling is often a good approach to help people to work through struggles that they are having in their life. Many feel comfortable with the idea of counseling and many do not feel comfortable. One of the benefits of counseling is that it can help you to find solutions or to problem solve more quickly than without it. However, some still may not be comfortable and to add to the challenges of becoming comfortable with the idea of counseling, during COVID, it is difficult to find counselors who are meeting in person and some do not feel comfortable with meeting virtually. A good alternative is to use journaling. Here are some journal prompts for February.



## JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR FEBRUARY

### *20 Journaling Prompts to Improve Your Relationships*

1. How satisfied are you with your social life?
2. How do you feel about your current relationship status?
3. How easy or hard do you find asking for help when you need it?
4. How do you feel about having children?
5. What qualities do you believe are most important in friendships?
6. Who do you consider to be your closest friend and why?
7. Describe a recent compliment or piece of positive feedback you received that was meaningful to you.
8. Do you tend to hold a grudge or to forgive and forget?
9. How do you feel about gossip?
10. Describe a recent compliment or piece of positive feedback you received that was meaningful to you.
11. How would you like to be seen by those closest to you?
12. Describe a time when you helped a friend in need.
13. What, for you, is the difference between “like” and “love?”
14. What does good communication in a relationship look like to you?
15. Who are your favourite people? Make a list.
16. Think of your closest relationship right now. What is one thing you could do today to make that relationship more satisfying and harmonious?
17. What feels unforgivable to you in a relationship?
18. What relationships would you like to develop further over the next six months? Who else would you like to meet?
19. Do you prefer to have a few close friends or a large social circle?
20. What would a level 10 life (i.e. an ideal version) of this area of your life look like?

[www.becomingwhoyouare.net](http://www.becomingwhoyouare.net)



**Angie Huber**, School Social Worker

[aahuber@fcps.edu](mailto:aahuber@fcps.edu)

703-988-8222