

Communicating EFFECTIVELY with Youth



1 REMEMBER CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Your expectations should not be the same for 6-year-olds and 16-year-olds. Remember that even if a youth is 16 years old by age, he/she may not act or think that at that level of maturity.

2 KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

The more you know about a given youth, the more likely you are to be successful in dealing with him/her. Knowing their name, habits, friends, family gives you a great advantage.

3 FIND SOMETHING TO PRAISE

Many youth you'll be seeing have had lives filled with failures and may not have experienced much success. It's easy to find fault with them and hard to find something positive to say. Any words of praise may affect them deeply.

4 BE SPECIFIC, CONSISTENT AND SIMPLE IN YOUR REQUESTS

Tell them what you want and how it should be done. Keep things simple. Complexity leads to confusion and failure. Let them know how their actions will shape what happens next.

5 SAVE YOUR THREATS

Don't make threats in anger. Don't bluff. It's more effective to explain the situation, outline the choices, and explain the consequences of each choice.

6 OCCASIONALLY CHANGE-UP

When an approach isn't working, you may want to try a new approach. If you've had the same interaction with someone again and again, do something different. The element of surprise can be powerful.

7 BE FAIR

No one likes dealing with someone who isn't fair. Youth are acutely concerned by what appears to be unfair treatment or favoritism. Be aware of your biases and be able to explain any differential treatment.

8 ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Being fair does not mean treating all youth the same way. You must take a case-by-case approach, and determine which approach is most likely to get the response you seek.

9 HELP EACH OTHER OUT

Sometimes you can get caught up in a "no win" situation with a particular youth. At those times it is often helpful to have someone else take over to help get things back on track.

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