

Shape Communication Game

For Affective Expression and Regulation

What's needed?

- Building blocks/paper shapes in different colors
- Divider

Why it's used:

- Children can often misinterpret what their parent is saying to them based on history and previous trauma, and perceive everything as negative. This is a way for the parent and child to recognize that we all communicate in different ways which might seem perfectly logical to us, but mean something very different to others.
- Parents often have difficulty interpreting reasons for misbehavior and might not understand why their child is reacting the way they are in certain situations. Often, a child misbehaves because he or she doesn't understand why a parent asks them to do a certain thing, so the counselor works with the parents and children to develop stronger and more effective communication strategies.

How to do it:

- During the game, the participants sit with their backs to each other, so each is unable to see what the other is doing. (You can also use a divider if you cannot sit them back to back in order to prevent them from seeing the other participant's work)
- The counselor gives each participant an identical pile of building blocks (or colored paper shapes), and assigns one the role of "communicator" and the other to the role of "listener."
 - The listener is not allowed to talk with the communicator.
- The communicator is instructed to create a shape/pattern with their materials, and upon completion, instruct the listener to replicate the shape.
 - The exercise is useful for showing how communication might be interpreted differently depending on the person, and encourages the communicator to develop different strategies to get his or her point across.
- When finished, allow the participants to look at each other's shape/pattern to see if they replicated it accurately.
- Switch roles to allow the listener to now be the communication and vice versa.

Variations:

- Once they try the games a few times, allow them to ask questions while being the listener to see if it becomes easier to replicate.
 - Explain that while listening, it is important to ask questions if something doesn't make sense or if something the other person said hurts their feelings in order for the communicator to clarify.