

The WELL NOW

"Small service is true service...the daisy, by the shadow that it casts, protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun." William Wordsworth The Student Health Center Newsletter SPRING EDITION 1993

Skills for active listening enhance relationships with parents, teachers



By Jennifer Koch
Henry David Thoreau said it best in a *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. "It takes two to speak the truth

—one to speak and another to hear." In verbal communication, the actual words spoken to communicate are not the only essential quality. They are necessary, but not sufficient in communication. The other essential component is listening. Communication cannot occur without it.

We attempt to communicate with other people hundreds of times each day, without thinking about it. Some of the most important communication that takes place in our lives occurs between our families, friends and teachers here at the university.

Usually, communicating with friends is relatively simple and uncomplicated. Most of our friends in college are around our same age, so there is not a "generation gap." Also, most people choose as friends those people who they can readily communicate with and those who understand them well. This is not to say that there is never miscommunication or misunderstanding between friends.

It seems, however, that student-parent and student-teacher relationships are more difficult. The first step in learning how to communicate more effectively with parents and teachers is to understand some fundamental "communication terminology."

According to *The Art of Listening* by Graham McGregor and R.S. White, a communicative breakdown occurs when participants of conversation perceive that something has gone wrong. For instance, the actions of the listener usually indicate whether he or she understood what was said.

McGregor and White explain that a misunderstanding is a disparity between

the speaker's and the hearer's semantic analysis of a given utterance. In other words, the hearer does not understand the meaning or particular use of a word or phrase that the speaker has said. An example of this might occur when someone older uses the word "gay" in a context meaning "happy," and someone younger interprets the word gay to mean "homosexual."

A miscommunication can take place when there is a mismatch between the speaker's intention and the hearer's interpretation. An example would be if you told your dad that someone you liked was "hot," but he thought that the person to whom you referred had a fever.

Misunderstanding and miscommunication are very similar concepts. The difference lies in that a miscommunication is concerned with the disparity between the speaker's intention and the interpretation taken by the listener. The speaker did not convey what he/she intended to. A misunderstanding, however, is concerned with the actual meanings of the words, and a problem arises when words have more than one meaning or are synonymous.

As the previous example of miscommunication with a father shows us, communicating with parents is not always a simple task. Some families make it look easy, but my experience has been that it isn't. Oftentimes, we tend to take our parents for granted and we become upset when they don't understand us. It is easier to fight and become annoyed with parents than with friends, since we take it for granted that our parents will forgive us.

Also, as college students, much of the

communicating that we do with our parents is at a distance and usually over the phone. Our parents are removed from our lives and aren't seeing our experiences first-hand. They have a tendency not to understand our needs and demands, especially since they are both usually for money.

In looking at and dealing with the situation, parents deserve a little slack. They want to understand us and they try to by communicating with us. Good communication between parents and children should accomplish the following: 1) Explain thoughts and feelings, 2) Refrain from assuming that your parents have been in your shoes or that they know how you feel, 3) Refrain from assuming that your parents will never understand your feelings and that it's



not worth the time to bother explaining. It often helps to put yourself in the other person's shoes and to try to look at things from his or her perspective. Respect other people and what they have to say, as well, and chances are that they will do the same.

In their article, McGregor and White suggest that people are very seldom listened to because "the person they are trying to get to listen to them is waiting desperately and impatiently for a chance to be listened to himself or herself."

It seems as though we all find ourselves impatiently anticipating someone to finish what they are saying so that we can jump in, say what we want to say and have them listen to us. Why are we

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Discussing needs reduces stress



By Joan Thorne
Are you married with children, a single parent, or do you have a partner with children? Are

just spend time with her.

Does it sound like I've been there? I have, and so have many other students seeking the post-marital diploma. With such high aspirations and so little time in the day, we must find a way to meet these demands bravely and head-on.

you returning to school after a homemaking mission or career change and wondering how you're going to cope with all the necessary adjustments and demands placed on you by your family and your own academic goals?

Many students returning to school find their change in role as primary care provider creates stress and communication difficulties at home, which may adversely affect their success at the university. The children and the spouse/partner may experience anger and resentment because they are not receiving as much quality time with you as they previously did. As a student, you may experience feelings of guilt or even a sense of loss because you aren't able to give as much support to the family as before.

Your spouse/partner may expect you to still have time to taxi the children to their activities, cook the meals, do the laundry, clean the house, do the grocery shopping, spend a little time with the kids before bed, put in some study time with reading, writing and more reading, and then be in the mood for romance, spelled capital S.E.X! Did you know that one of the body's first responses to stress may be a lowering of sexual libido?

Well, if all of these problems sound vaguely familiar and the mere thought of all those demands hasn't brought on a major anxiety attack by now, then just wait until midterms or finals. That's about the time your five year old will come down with the chicken pox, or simply feigns illness because she so desperately wants you to stay home and

Sandy Tsuneyoshi, Staff Psychologist at the U of O Counseling Center, and Kathy Carnine, staff counselor at Springfield Nazarene Church (who recently obtained her Master's Degree by commuting to Portland every day), offer the following suggestions for methods of communicating and coping with the needs and difficulties of students and their families.

Communicate Your Needs. Sit down, talk and work on a precise plan together for scheduling family needs and activities. Tell your spouse/partner and children that there will be a change in the duties of each family member and the amount of time you will be able to spend with them. If you previously cooked all the family meals and now find this burdensome, say, "I'll need someone else to cook dinner on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday." Be specific! Don't expect family members to read your mind or just happen to notice what needs to be done around the house.

Manage Your Time Wisely. This is probably the biggest obstacle to stress management for students. It may be helpful to sit down at the beginning of each week with your spouse/partner and make out a schedule of his or her time commitments, family activities and your needs for academic success. Your family must understand that your intellectual goals are serious and just as important as any time commitments for their personal pursuits. It is also very important for spouses/partners to schedule at least

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INSIDE

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- Women and AIDS

THE BOTTOM LINE

FREE Cholesterol Screening every Tuesday from 9:30-11:30 a.m. in the Health Education Room across from the Pharmacy (Bring your student I.D.).

Be a Peer Health Advisor—call 346-4456 or 346-2728 for more information.

It isn't who you are...it's what you do



By Sarah Napier

Stop and think for a second. Can you name all of the people that each person you know has had sexual relations with? And what do you know about their medical history, such as the number

of surgeries or blood transfusions they've had? Before you make the decision to share a needle with anyone, you should be able to answer these sorts of questions.

The HIV virus can be in a person's bloodstream without that person showing any symptoms. It is very possible that an intimate acquaintance of yours contracted the HIV virus from simply being in the hospital when he or she was in high school or even during childhood, so play it safe. As we have all been warned, unsafe sexual contact with a person who is carrying the HIV virus is extremely risky. However, we should not overlook the second leading risk factor involved in the transmission of HIV, the sharing of needles.

In an article from the *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1991, Dr. June Osborn, Chairperson of the AIDS commission, explains, "The flash-fire potential of HIV transmission through injection drug use has

been demonstrated repeatedly in this country and around the world. It is an issue of the greatest urgency."

Studies have shown that 29 percent of the known people with AIDS are bisexual men, 17 percent are IV drug users who have shared needles with other people, 8 percent fit into both of the previous categories, and at least 4 percent are heterosexuals. This means that 25 percent of the people with AIDS were involved in the sharing of infected needles. Of course, it is necessary to note that the phrase "IV drug user" does not necessarily mean "those heavy duty dudes who shoot up heavy drugs." The phrase does include addicts such as these, but it also includes people who experiment. *Once is all it takes.*

HIV/AIDS can be contracted through any dirty needle use. These risks involve the use of steroids, tattoos, ear-piercing, and acupuncture. Regardless of what substance is in the needle, sharing needles with other people exposes you to their blood.

The danger of exposure is not with the stereotypical groups of people who transmit HIV/AIDS, it is the actual behavior. We need to recognize that *no one* person is immune to the HIV/AIDS virus. All it takes is one dirty needle.

Many people are willing to try anything once.

Certainly experimenting with an intravenous drug a few times does not mean you are a drug addict, but it does make you a user of a needle. One raging party, a great "buzz," and someone you think you can trust; these are *all* potential situations that may allow you to put yourself into a risk category without even knowing "what's up."

It is impossible to know whether or not a person is carrying the HIV virus unless he or she has been tested and re-tested. *And yes*, clean, outwardly healthy, intelligent, financially-secure people contract the virus.

The two highest risk behaviors involved with the spread of HIV/AIDS (unsafe sexual contact and shared needles) are especially prevalent on college campuses because these behaviors are more prominent among people age 18 to 25. The dangers of IV drug use (including steroids) are definitely an area of Health Education that we need to address, especially with the ever-rising trend in being "buff" and physically fit with the emphasis on body-building and athletics. *We need to spread the word.*

When we hear "IV drug use," we need to remember that this includes any substance that involves needles. This could be tattoos, acupuncture, ear-piercing, steroids or other drugs.

Any use of dirty needles—it only takes once.

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