

Guidance for Caregivers - Communication

<p>Containing Difficult Discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have caregivers designate weekly or semi-weekly meeting times with all caregiver(s) and teen (no siblings included). • Recommend a time when everyone is the least stressed, the most consistently available, and the most awake. • Recommend that the family use the behavioral contract to keep the discussion focused on stated expectations. • Have caregivers start by pointing out positive change steps taken and by offering praise. • Suggest limiting discussions to no more than 15 minutes to keep it from becoming overwhelming. • Meetings can be creative: while on a walk, while driving to Dunkin' Donuts, over breakfast at a favorite café. • Ask caregivers to avoid bringing up issues outside of designated times. If they forget, they can model apologizing for not keeping their side of the agreement and move on. • SAFETY Issues should be discussed immediately; caregivers should not wait for the designated time(s) to discuss any safety concerns.
<p>Consistent, clear, and warm communication</p>	<p>Encourage caregivers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be direct and clear about limits and expectations. • Be consistent on follow through with things they say they are going to do. • Use communication tools like “Reflective Listening” and “I statements” (see below) • Tell their teen that while they dislike behavioral choices, they still love him/her. • Remain hopeful and believe that their teen can make better choices in the future. • Allow space for negotiation: listen to every request and find compromise when possible. • Avoid stigmatizing or hopeless messages (For example: “You’re [lazy/an addict/a failure].” “You’ll never amount to anything.”)
<p>Try to Detach Emotions</p>	<p>Remind caregivers that emotional reactions are NORMAL in challenging situations. Many caregivers benefit from ongoing counseling for their own support. The steps below may help with communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep discussions as rational and unemotional as possible. Find a place to express emotions <u>outside</u> of your communication with

Guidance for Caregivers - Communication

	<p>your teen (talk with your partner or a friend, meet with a clinician, punch a punching bag, go for a run, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice what you need to say ahead of time to avoid reacting. • Respond (think before you act) rather than react (act before you think). • Use the STOP acronym to help you respond (and not react): Stop, Take a deep breath, Open to your Options, and then Proceed with whatever option you chose.
<p>Use Communication Tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective Listening: Caregiver allows teen to speak without interruption, and then responds only by reflecting back what they believe was said. If the teen feels caregiver has misinterpreted, the teen should try again. Once the caregiver understands the teen’s perspective, they swap roles, with the caregiver now communicating and the teen listening and then reflecting only what is said. • “I” Statements: Suggest that parents make statements that reflect their own experience to avoid judging or provoking defensiveness. Use this formula: “I feel _____ that you _____ because _____ I.” For example: “I feel disappointed that you met up with James because I worry that you will use drugs together.”

Disclaimer: The Communication – Guidance for Caregivers Tip Sheet is offered for information purposes only and is not meant as a substitute for independent medical judgment or the advice of a qualified physician or healthcare professional. The Communication – Guidance for Caregivers Tip Sheet is not intended to provide medical advice or clinical services to patients, to verify or approve medical information or credentials, or to make any medical referrals. The Communication – Guidance for Caregivers Tip Sheet not provide professional or medical advice or recommend any particular medical device or service, including recommendations or endorsements through the Communication – Guidance for Caregivers Tip Sheet. Users who choose to use information or recommendations made available by the Communication – Guidance for Caregivers do so at their own risk and should not rely on that information as professional medical advice or use it to replace any relationship with their physicians or other qualified healthcare professionals.