

How to hold a conversation to hear the other person and be heard?

DARIA CHMIEL

teacher, social therapist, director of the KAT Youth Social Therapy Centre in Warsaw.

A pre-condition for good communication is to have contact in a relationship built on kindness and trust. One of the first success factors in a good relationship is availability. A kind adult who has time for a young person. He or she listens, but they also hear. They listen a lot and talk less. They give time to consider answers and are fine if no answers are returned. They can be a companion in silence.

A good adult is authentic, predictable, and consistent. He or she can set and obey boundaries. Youngsters rebel against “bans” and “rules”. Teenage rebellion is an inherent quality of adolescence. School is a great place for this: it is considered an oppressive and repressive system. Is there any other way to look at school if not through the prism of hierarchy, power, assessment, punishment, and reward? On the one hand, young people are required to be responsible, creative, and open-minded; on the other, they are stripped of these qualities in the process of education, getting nothing in return.

Children/adolescents/youth learn the world from adults. First, they accept all indiscriminately, but, over time, they begin to ask questions, express disagreement, raise doubts. They learn to communicate and enter into relationships with adults, parents, and teachers. In the school reality, adults' role is to set models. Children, regardless of age, observe and imitate adults. They watch how adults behave and relate to each other in conversations. If they cannot follow positive behavioural patterns at home, it is particularly important to show that it is possible to talk without judging, humiliating, downplaying, and ignoring one's feelings. Young people can sense falsehood easily. They watch whether what they say and do is consistent.

Give more space to young people. If necessary, wait for their answer; give them a moment to ponder. Do not rush with the class material under the core curriculum pressure. Explain things. Remember that kids go to school to learn, but they do not need to know everything. Our role is to show them the world. “How come you don't know it?” Another time they will

not admit that they do not understand, that they do not know what to say. Our communication ends here. A monologue instead of a dialogue. A lecture instead of a discussion.

In social therapy centres, the central element of working with young people is socio-therapeutic classes. They are held once a week over two class hours. The groups are small, up to 16 people. Each class is at the same time a socio-therapeutic group. It has two mentors – a teacher and a social therapist. The latter does not teach any subject; they only attend to students' affairs. They are available during school hours and often outside their shift. They keep in touch with parents/guardians and institutions, such as courts, the Police, specialist physicians, and psychotherapists). During the classes, the social therapist works with the students around relationships, contact, and process. They teach young people good communication, creative problem-solving, setting boundaries, and respecting the boundaries of others. To make this work effective, the feelings of safety and trust are crucial. The teacher must earn trust, so must the participants in relation to one another. At the beginning of the process, the members of the class establish the so-called "contract terms," which they undertake to follow. Usually the terms are few (the fewer, the easier to remember and obey), the main one is confidentiality. In other words, everybody promises not to talk "outside" about what is discussed in class. This is a prerequisite for effective trust-building. Other terms concern non-judgement, respect, and, more technically, not speaking all at once, cutting in, interrupting, picking, scoffing. The young people learn how to listen and hear others. What is more, they have a chance to be listened to by their peers and by the adult teacher. Building a friendly relationship based on trust is a process that can be likened to learning to walk: first, you take clumsy and small steps; over time, your walking becomes more secure, faster, although it can sometimes be slower. An adult is a companion in this journey. Sometimes they will push you forward and sometimes will let you slow down. They will give you the right to stumble and fall, but they will always be there to dress your bleeding knees.

The role of teachers is to approach each student individually. Ideally, the teacher should be able to acknowledge their mistake and give up the "know-all" attitude. They should be able to say "sorry" if they are unfair or go too far. They should also be the ones to share knowledge, remembering that the kids go to school to learn. They do not have to

know everything. It is our role is to show them the world. "How come you don't know it?" Another time they will not admit that they do not understand. Our communication ends here. A monologue instead of a dialogue. A lecture instead of a discussion.

Do an exercise and try to remember your own education. Which teachers did you like and why? What qualities did they display? Why were they respected? Which ones didn't you like? What did they do or demonstrate? Why were you afraid of them? Try to copy the "cool" ones and not the others.

And not to be discouraged. Give yourself the right to make mistakes. You have heard it before but there are no perfect people. Say it to yourselves every now and again. And remember the above is true not only about you but also about the students.

Well, that sounds absolutely idealistic. But the conference was attended by people who want to do something. They have a sense of responsibility for their work and for their young students, who often spend more time at school than at home.

The role of the headteacher must not be ignored. He or she should support their staff by offering training that will enhance everyday work in the changing reality, and will fit the staff's needs. The headteacher should not only focus on holding teachers to account but should also listen and hear them. They know that communication and good relations foster the development and well-being of teachers. If successful, they will always be forged into motivation to work with young people.

*Jane Nelsen, Steven Foster, Arlene Raphael, *Pozytywna dyscyplina dla dzieci ze specjalnymi potrzebami.*

<https://www.eduksiegarnia.pl/pozytywna-dyscyplina-dla-dzieci-ze-specjalnymi-potrebami>

*Jane Nelsen, *Pozytywna dyscyplina.*

https://bonito.pl/produkt/pozytywna-dyscyplina-2?gclid=CjwKCAjw0N6hBhAUEiwAXab-TX0OVuxj76Bx5IDsBwbP2H-PG4znuI7jt7H145IWKOlphQwNUsXy8RoCjFgQAvD_BwE

https://www.eduksiegarnia.pl/pozytywna-dyscyplina-dla-nastolatkow-pozytywne-podejscie-do-wychowywania-szczesliwych-zaradnych-i-dojrzalych-nastolatkow?gclid=CjwKCAjw0N6hBhAUEiwAXab-TWnU4ZZGNxoc_hhHJIYYVuKq8qQrA_KWdZ4YYVV-9iHlxDX8-Kv4NBoCOMsQAvD_BwE