

The Impact of Negativity

Myrna Lapres
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Imagine that you have in front of you two glasses of clear, refreshing water. Then, I come along and put a few drops of contaminated, sewage water into one of them. Would you take a drink of that glass? Even though I put in only a small amount, it is highly unlikely that you would drink out of the one that is polluted.



When we allow criticism, negativity, and put-downs to be part of our family culture, like that contaminated water, it taints our relationships. There are

steps that can help us work towards having less negativity in our families.

1. First of all, we need to remember that connection is the essence of all thriving relationships and all forms of criticism and negativity break that connection.
2. Second, we need to realize that something can be perceived as negative even if that isn't our intention. The other person is the judge. If they say it was negative, we need to believe that they experienced it as negative! Negativity can be expressed through words, a tone of voice, or an eye roll that communicates criticism, shame, or blame. It may be intentional or accidental. But in all cases, a "put down" ruptures connection.
3. The key to obtaining healthy relationships is working towards communication with zero negativity. In the absence of negative energy, safety, connectio, and joy can be restored. So, the next step is to make the decision to work on this as a family. Hold a family meeting. If you need some tips on how to get started, check out this blogposts: www.coachmyrna.org/blog/family-meetings-recipe-for-success
4. During the family meeting, come up with a code word for your family that signals that someone has experienced negativity. It can be something like: bing, ouch, wow or whatever you decide. The individual who has experienced the put-down or criticism says the word.
5. Then comes the redo process. This might include taking a break if the individual needs to calm down. The one who experienced the negativity can ask for the other person to restate what they said with no criticism or sarcasm. After that, a reconnecting behavior--a hug, an apology, or a kind note--can help everyone get back on track.
6. It is important for all family members to begin to get curious about each other rather than being defensive. Learning to ask questions can help:
 - **I wonder why they does he or she think or say that? (ask oneself)**

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- **I am curious, can you tell me more about? (ask another family member)**

It might be necessary to practice/role play this in a family meeting. Ask for volunteers or volunteer yourself. Try a having a **Zero Negativity Day** and include sharing three appreciations or affirmations with family members. Talk about how it went: Was it hard to not use negativity? What did each family member realize about their own habits? How can you help each other continue to decrease negativity in your family?

This concept comes from my training as a Safe Conversation facilitator. For more on this subject, check out two previous blogs:

www.coachmyrna.org/blog/learning-to-have-safe-conversations

www.coachmyrna.org/blog/steps-to-cultivating-family-communication-and-connection-the-space-between

To purchase my book on Amazon, click here:
tinyurl.com/7-Gifts-to-Give-Your-Child

If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: www.coachmyrna.org/ Find out more about Safe Conversations www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html.

