

# Communication Tips for IEP Meetings

“ THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN COMMUNICATION IS HEARING WHAT ISN'T SAID. ”

- PETER DRUCKER

## 1. Put yourself in their shoes...



EVEN THE MOST WELL MEANING ADULT CAN FEEL DEFENSIVE OR BECOME AGGRESSIVE WHEN DISCUSSING THEIR CHILD AND THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION. THINK ABOUT WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE THEM FOR A MOMENT. HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN FEELING FRUSTRATED? HOW MIGHT THEY FEEL ABOUT HAVING A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY? HOW MIGHT THEY FEEL IF THEY DON'T THINK THEIR CHILD IS GETTING WHAT THEY NEED?

## 2. Use the "revoicing strategy"

AFTER LISTENING TO A COMPLAINT, GAIN CLARIFICATION AND UNDERSTANDING.

"SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS..."  
"IS THAT RIGHT?"



## 3. Use the "example strategy"



"CAN YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF THIS?" THE EXAMPLE CAN HELP YOU DETERMINE NEXT STEPS FOR ACTION AND RESPONSE.

## 4. Show that you're on the same team.



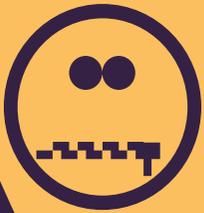
"HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE (STUDENT'S) EXPERIENCE THE BEST POSSIBLE?"

## 5. Take a time-out.

"I KNOW WE ALL WANT WHAT IS BEST FOR (STUDENT). MAYBE WE SHOULD TAKE A FIVE-MINUTE BREAK TO COOL DOWN."



## 6. Listen, listen, listen



OFTENTIMES, PEOPLE JUST WANT TO BE HEARD. SUPPRESS THE URGE TO RESPOND AND LET PARENTS TALK OUT THEIR FRUSTRATION.

## 7. Dig deeper

"CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED THAT HAS LED YOU TO FEEL THIS WAY?"

THEN USE A STRATEGY LIKE 2, 3, OR 6.

**Remember, empathy, listening, and patience can go a long way.**

## 8. Pay attention to your own body language.

WHAT PERCEPTIONS ARE YOU GIVING WHEN YOU SIT AND LISTEN? ARE YOU LEANING BACK OR LEANING FORWARD? USE A COMFORTABLE FORWARD STANCE THAT SHOWS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LISTENING TO THE PARENT.

## 9. Choose your battles

ASK YOURSELF, "IS THIS WORTH PUTTING ALL OF MY ENERGY INTO TO FIGHT?" IF A PARENT REQUEST IS UNREASONABLE, FIND SOME MIDDLE GROUND THAT BOTH PARTIES CAN AGREE TO THAT STILL BENEFIT THE CHILD. DON'T BE AFRAID TO SAY YES TO REASONABLE REQUESTS. REMEMBER, THE IEP IS MEANT TO HELP THE STUDENT.

## 10. Just Breathe

DEEP BREATHING HAS BEEN SHOWN TO EFFECTIVELY LOWER STRESS LEVELS.