

Adolescent & Parent Perspectives: Family Activities that Improve Family Communication

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Objectives

- To analyze which family activities correlate with higher family communication *for parents*
- To analyze which family activities correlate with higher family communication *for adolescents*
- To identify which family activities might have the most impact on family communications

Introduction

Healthy parent and adolescent communication is a critical protective for adolescents with high-risk behavior (Fulkerson, et. al, 2006). Studies have found that adolescents who had higher ratings of family communication were less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors such as illicit drug use, drinking, and unsafe sexual practices. Family activities are often used to increase communication between parents and adolescents. The current study investigated which family activities were correlated with higher ratings of family communication for both parents and adolescents.

Methodology

We used secondary data from the Adolescent Health Literacy project (Caldwell & Melton, 2020). The sample consisted of parents (n = 105; age M = 44.74) and their adolescents (n = 105; age M = 15.87) from Texas. To determine which family activities were more predictive of family communication, we correlated ratings of communication (Family Communication Scale, 10-items; Olson 1982) with family activities (Programme for International Student Assessment; 13-items, OECD, 2017), per role of adolescent and parent.



Healthy parent and adolescent communication is a critical protective factor for adolescents with high-risk behavior.

Photo Credit: FirstCry Parenting

Table 1. Correlations between Communication and Home-Based Activities

All Activities	Parent Communication	Child Communication
Social Issue Discussion	0.28**	0.11
Media/Entertainment Discussion	0.15	0.12
School Monitoring	0.33***	0.21*
Family Meal Time	0.46***	0.31**
Just Talking	0.18	0.24*
Bookstore/Library Visits	0.13	0.14
Book Discussions	0.25*	0.18
Homework Together	0.30**	0.28**
Sex Education	0.15	0.32***
Nutrition and Food	0.20*	0.07
Money Management	0.18**	0.13
Health Discussions	0.24**	0.25**
Recreational Family Time	0.29**	0.22*

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Results

The results of the analysis can be found in Table 1. Overall, the analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant correlation between parents' ratings of family communication and family activities for 9 of the 13 activities. The top 3 activities for parents were: family mealtime, school monitoring, and homework together. Overall, the analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant correlation between adolescents' ratings of family communication and family activities for 7 of the 13 activities. The top 3 activities for adolescents included: sex education, family mealtime, and homework together. Overall, the analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant correlation between both parent and adolescents' ratings of family communication and family activities for 5 of the 13 activities. The top 3 activities for both parents and adolescents included: family mealtime, homework together, and health discussions.

Conclusion

Parents and adolescents share some similar perspectives on family activities' impact on family communication. However, they have divergent perspectives on which family activities have the greatest impact on family communication (Larson, 1997). Adolescent family communication ratings can be a critical protective factor for adolescents with high-risk behaviors. While there are limitations to the study and generalizability of this information, this study can help educate family professionals on which activities may improve communication from the point of view of the parent and the child.

Key References

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