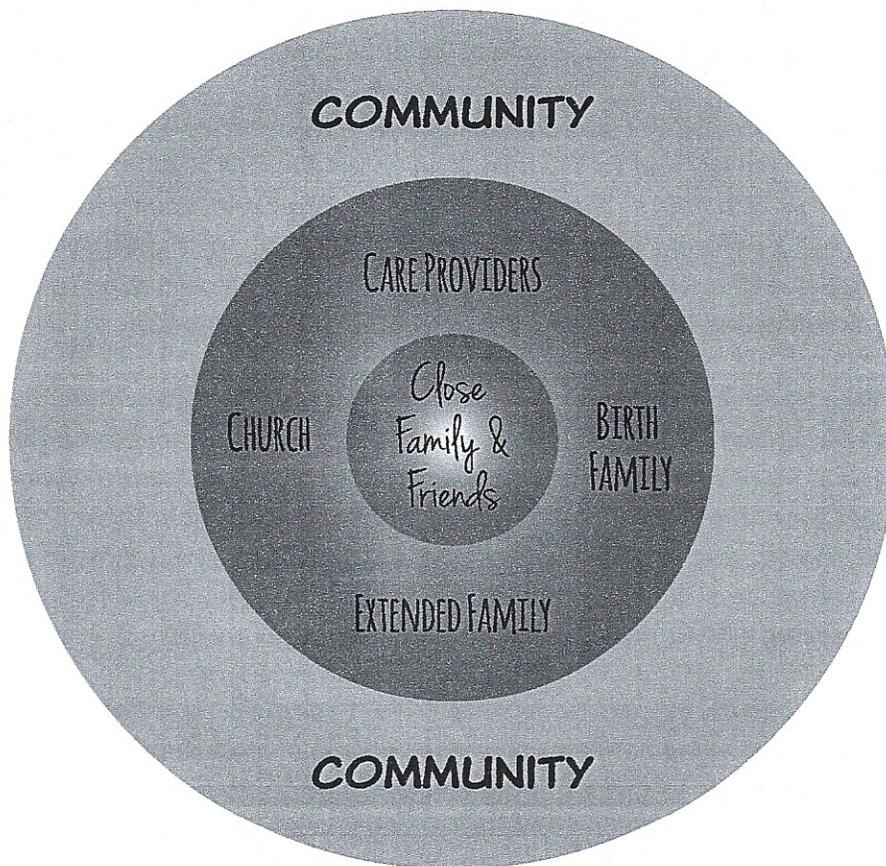


Growing Hope

BY VINTAGE GRACE



COMMUNICATION RECIPE

1. STATE THE FACTS
2. TELL HOW IT MAKES YOU FEEL
3. GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT
4. WHAT YOU NEED FROM NOW ON

Help for Setting Boundaries

- 1) **Be Intentional.** When you see that someone is not understanding you or trying to make you act in a way that is against what you know in your “hoola hoop”, you probably need to walk away and really focus on how to set the boundary before you speak. Being misunderstood by someone in your inner circle really hurts, and its easy to react from that hurt. Being intentional means that instead of reacting, you’re spending the time to come to this from a place of calm and love.
- 2) **Plan Ahead.** When you’ve made the mistake with a boundary before, plan ahead what you are going to say and do the next time you are in that situation. Have someone role play with you, so that you are more comfortable when you need to address it. Or use a different form of communication (email, text, phone call) if that will be easier. Have a trusted, calm friend look over your communication to make sure it is communicating truth in love. Use the communication recipe.
- 3) **Notice Your Body and Emotions.** The way that I know a boundary of mine is being crossed is when I feel a certain way in my body. I generally feel this before I even know why. So when I feel tense, my heart rate quickens, or I notice that I am anxious or annoyed to see someone, I check in with myself to see if there is a boundary issue. Also, anger, resentment, annoyance, guilt, shame, and stress can be signs that there are boundaries being crossed. These signal that I need to spend some time checking in with myself about the boundaries in my life.
- 4) **Pay attention to how you are being with OTHER people’s boundaries.** Do you notice that you are working hard to make other people change their minds? Are you doing everything you can to make someone understand something? You may need to take a step back and check in on whether or not you are trying to step into someone else’s “hoola hoop”. If you are, check in with someone about how to let it go and grieve, and receive what you need from someone who is able to give it to you.
- 5) **Recognize that this is not easy.** You are going to make a lot of boundary mistakes at first. It takes a lot of practice, especially with your inner circle. Read books, find a therapist, and be patient with yourself and others. Practice and ask for forgiveness. There will be some people who do not like your boundaries. Allow them to have this feeling, and practice your boundaries anyway. You may find that you have a lot of guilt in setting boundaries. Give yourself some time to work through this, and find someone to help you if you can’t do it on your own.

Examples of Boundaries Setting

Community Circle:

- Woman at the coffee shop: "That's your daughter? She doesn't look a THING like you!"
- "This is my daughter. Funny how that happens sometimes!"

- Checker in line: "Are all those YOURS?"
- "Yes, these are all my beautiful blessings"

- Man at the park: "It's OK if your daughter asks me for candy, I can share!"
- "You are so kind to offer. But we have a family rule about only eating the food we brought with us"

- Woman at the store: "You know, if my kid did that I'd swat them on the behind"
- <silence>

- Neighbor that you don't know: "Your son is welcome at my house anytime!"
- "Thanks for the invitation! We have a rule of only playing with neighbors outside in the front yard. If any of your kids would like to join us that would be fun!"

Caregiver, Birth Family, Church, and Extended Family Circle:

- Teacher at school: "It's OK, all children do that!"
- "Yes, that is a common behavior. In my child, it might also be explained by his/her history. I'd like to give you some more information on that."

- Parent of a schoolmate: "Why is your child not allowed to spend the night?"
- "Our kids have particular needs that require us to have different family rules that other families may have. It's a family rule to not do sleepovers. Can we plan a different activity for the kids to get together?"

- Birth grandparent: "Why are we not invited to her birthday party?"
- "I know that you would like to see her on her birthday. We are worried that on such an emotional day, adding another emotional experience will overwhelm her and make the day harder and possibly ruin the day. We would love to set up another time to celebrate, let us know if you would like to schedule that"

- School principle: "Your child has severe behavior problems"
- "Our child has a complex history involving prenatal exposure to drug/alcohol, early neglect/trauma, and these diagnoses. It is critical that we include those issues when looking at his behaviors. I will get you the reports from the different clinicians we have already worked with, and I will send you an email officially requesting the school to evaluate my child as well."

- School mate: "Is she really adopted? What happened to her real mom?"
- "I'll let you ask her. It's her story!"

- Anyone who does not follow a rule that exists to create safety
- Escalate Boundaries (provide supervision, limit or discontinue contact)

Close Friends and Family Circle:

- Grandmother: "Why won't you let me spend time on my own with your new child? Don't you trust me? I've raised a lot of kids myself, you know!"
 - "I have every confidence in your ability to take care of my child. What is happening here has to do with building an attached relationship with the parents as our child's caregivers. That has to happen by us being the only one to care for his needs, at least in the beginning. I have a great article about that I would love to share with you, if you're interested"

 - Best Friend: "You really need to try Cry It Out. It's not right for your kid to be needing you all night"
 - "I know Cry It Out has worked so well for so many people. It's different for kids who have had a hard start in life and who did not have someone who was reliably meeting their needs. I'd love to explain it to you, if you'd like"

 - Uncle: "I should be able to give your kids Christmas gifts when I want to, you can't tell me I can't"
 - "I'm so happy that you want to show love for my kids by buying them gifts. Unfortunately, because of their early trauma, gifts tend to make them overexcited and overwhelm them on an already overwhelming day. Can we discuss a different day that you could bring over presents?"
- And to escalate:
"If you decide to still bring gifts over, we will have to put them in the other room for another day. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I also want to make sure the kids have the best Christmas that they can. I'd love to give you a book to read, so that you can know more about trauma and the brain."
- Church Group: "Your child should not talk disrespectfully like that to you. What are you doing about it?"
 - "I bet it is hard to hear a child speak like that. I wish that we could have been in their lives from the first day, so that we could have worked to build a relationship with better communication. It would be great to sit down and talk more about this with you, so that you could learn how you can help us in these difficult situations."

 - Friends swoop in to help when your child is raging, blaming you for not "taking care of them"
 - "I know this may look like a normal temper tantrum gone wrong, but there is a lot more to raging than that. There is a lot going on in my child's brain that causes the behavior that you're seeing. Let me show you an article that talks about it, and why I choose to react the way I do."

 - Aunt says racially inappropriate things in front of your bi-racial child
 - Pull her aside to a private location. "I need you to not make comments like _____ around my child. Given his heritage, that could come across as hurtful."
- To Escalate:
You may have to limit the amount of time you spend with someone who is making hurtful comments about your child or his/her heritage, if they are unable or unwilling to change this communication.