



# **MLCPC 106:**

***Coaching Parents and Families Using the 3 C's***

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**Abstract**

This session will discuss how coaches may best work with clients and their families on communication, confrontation, and conflict resolution. Dr. Mintle explains the importance of open communication between parents and children and how coaches may best speak the truth in love to their clients. Finally, the options an expecting mother has will be discussed and Dr. Mintle will explain how to effectively help clients through this process.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Participants will gain skills to encourage open communication.
2. Participants will be trained in how to use confrontation and conflict resolution to improve relationships.
3. Participants will explore the options that an expecting mother faces in the crisis pregnancy situation.

## I. **Communication**

A. We know from many studies that open communication with parents or a caring adult lessens the chance of teens engaging in risky behaviors.

B. **Open communication:** whether teens have **conversations** rather than lectures with their parents about contraception, sexual behavior, and sexually transmitted infections/diseases (STIs/STDs).

1. Only half (50%) of American teens have open conversations with their parents.<sup>1</sup>
2. Two thirds of young men and almost half of women do not find it easy to talk with their parents about sex.<sup>2</sup>
3. Open communication about real sexual pressures needs to be cultivated **regularly** in a teen's life.

C. **Myths** about communication:

1. Talking about sex will make it more likely to happen.
  - The opposite is actually true.
  - Parents can communicate their own **values** on sexuality with their teens.
  - Parents can better understand their teen's perspective.
  - Parents can tailor shared information based on their teenager's stage of development, life experience, personality, and knowledge level.

- In order to coach parents to talk about sex, parents have to feel comfortable and at ease with the topic. So part of your coaching may include meeting with parent groups, individual parents, church leaders and more in order to dispel the myth that talking encourages sexual activity.
  - Helping families openly communicate is an important part of the prevention, and will help families in crisis talk to their other children as well. Siblings are often ignored when it comes to a crisis pregnancy, yet they are observing how the family handles the crisis.
  - Parents should begin having conversations about sexual behavior in the later years of elementary school. Talking should include information about the body, menstruation, and puberty.
  - In middle school, parents should address sexual messages sent by the culture, strategies to resist sexual temptation, flee a situation and avoid tempting situations. By high school, it's all about open communication and listening. It is never too late for families to begin conversations about sexual behavior.
2. My child knows more than I do.
- This is probably **not** the case.
  - Just because a teen knows the vocabulary doesn't mean he or she knows what those terms actually mean.
3. Certain forms of contraception will protect you.
- **No** contraception is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy.
  - Commercials and ads make it sound like using a condom or birth control is effective protection.

D. Parents should keep in mind that just having “the **Big Talk**” once does not mean that their work is done.

1. Talking about sexual struggles in today’s world is an **on-going** conversation.
2. Parents **cannot** cover everything at once.
3. Parents should react to events in the culture to provide a **biblical perspective**.

E. Helping parents communicate better:

1. Parents can begin sexual conversations like this, “It is my job as a parent to make sure you understand and know how to handle all kinds of pressures you face, and that includes sexual ones.”
2. Fathers and mothers need to be on the same page as to what they are communicating in the area of sexuality.
3. It may be easier to have these conversations when you are walking, driving or doing an activity together.
4. Begin with general questions about classmates and friends and then move into more specifics.
5. Try to stay positive but discuss the real possibilities of negative outcomes and how to resist temptation.
6. Openly discuss messages from media (music, TV, movies) and contrast them to the biblical viewpoint. How do these messages impact our thinking?

7. Don't moralize, but communicate your values and why we believe what we believe, allowing any questions or concerns to be brought up.
8. Pay attention to your child's romantic relationships and don't assume he or she is not sexually active because of his or her faith.
9. Give frank, age-appropriate information when a child requests it—this creates an atmosphere of safety and permission to talk.
10. Don't share your sexual past with your teen, as it can sometimes give permission for sexual behavior.

F. Coaching communication involves helping people see how communication works. Communication is **more than words**.

1. 7% of all communication is **verbal**.<sup>3</sup>
  - *“There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” — Proverbs 12:18*
2. 55% of all communication is **nonverbal**.<sup>4</sup>
  - *“As in water, face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects man.” — Proverbs 27:19*
3. 38% of all communication is **tone of voice**.<sup>5</sup>
  - *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” — Proverbs 15:1*

- G.** When coaching, it is important to develop good **listening skills** so that young girls and families can deal with their emotions and begin to process what has happened.

*“Blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears because they hear.”*

— **Matthew 13:16**

- 1.** Create an environment where the client feels at ease and can talk openly. Listen well by:
  - Removing distractions
  - Being understanding of the crisis and expressing empathy
  - Being patient with the process and slowing down impulsive reactions
  - Furnishing her with as much appropriate information as possible
  - Listening to what led to the problem
  - Trying to distinguish between facts and opinions/beliefs
  - Encouraging her to work on solutions to the crisis
  
- 2.** After listening, to insure that you heard accurately:
  - Clarify
  - Restate what you heard—both facts and feelings
  - Summarize and ask, “Is that right?”

## II. Confrontation

- A. Coaching requires you to be comfortable with confrontation. It is your job to speak the truth in love and help move the person and the family forward with problem-solving and action.
  
- B. Successful confrontation: a face-to-face dialogue between two parties resulting in a resolution to the problem and *an improved relationship between the parties*.
  
- C. When faced with a crisis pregnancy, a woman can choose to:
  - 1. Avoid people or the situation.
  - 2. Accommodate people or the situation.
  - 3. Defer to someone else to handling things.
  - 4. Confront what's going on.
  
- D. When confrontation is not handled well, it can lead to:
  - 1. Uncontrolled outbursts.
  - 2. Emotional wounding.
  - 3. A false sense of success or resolution.
  - 4. Relationship failure.
  - 5. Aggressiveness where one individual's rights take precedent over another's.
  - 6. Bullying.
  
- E. Before confronting, consider:
  - 1. *"He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him."*  
— **Proverbs 18:13**

2. *“The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.” — Proverbs 15:28*

**F.** In order to confront in a way that improves a relationship:

1. Pray about the situation. Ask God to give you the words to say.
2. Identify what you want to say and what you would like to happen.
3. Rehearse the confrontation, being careful to avoid being defensive and blaming.
4. Focus on the facts and try to stay calm when dealing with feelings.
5. Realize feelings of helplessness, powerlessness or inadequacy over what is now happening.
6. Be careful to separate out behavior from the person. In **John 8:1-11**, Jesus clearly loved the woman found in adultery but confronted her sin.

**G.** When dealing with specific confrontation related to a crisis pregnancy:

1. Make sure a pregnancy test has been completed and the pregnancy is confirmed.
2. Decide who to tell—someone trusted, hopefully a parent.
3. Notify the father of the baby. If possible, the woman should ask his for help (i.e. accompanying her to appointments, paying for the baby’s needs, and providing emotional support).

### **III. Conflict Resolution**

- A.** Crisis pregnancy raises many different emotional reactions. Your job as a coach is to help people work through their emotions while moving forward with a plan. Various reactions include:
- 1.** Not wanting the baby.
  - 2.** Viewing the creation of a child as an achievement and not recognizing the serious responsibilities attached to parenting.
  - 3.** Keeping a child to please another family member.
  - 4.** Wanting a baby to have someone to love, but not understanding the amount of care the baby needs and how that love will be challenged by care.
  - 5.** Depression is a common reaction because of the losses that will be experienced as others their age are moving on with their lives.
  - 6.** Many do not realize that their adorable baby can also be demanding and sometimes irritating. Because many young clients will lack the parenting skills needed, they don't know how to manage their feelings and do what is needed.
  - 7.** Some become overwhelmed by guilt, anxiety, and fears about the future and need help sorting through those emotions.
  - 8.** Young mothers are uncertain about their roles and may be frustrated by the constant demands of caretaking. A cute infant becomes a demanding toddler.

- B.** As you work through the reactions to the crisis, you will be coaching **options** of keeping the baby or going the adoption route. It will also be necessary to include the father and the family when possible. It is helpful in decision making to discuss the **pros and cons** of each option, make a list, and weigh each option. Have everyone weigh in but ultimately the birth mother has to feel comfortable with the option she chooses.
- C.** The options that the mother will have to consider:
- 1. Adoption:** Make sure she finds a reputable and ethical agency that provides counseling **before and after** placement. Remember that in order to place her child for adoption, she **must receive permission from the child's father** as well.
  - 2. Keeping the baby and being a single parent:** This will definitely be difficult, but it is certainly possible. If the woman plans to do this, get a parent or friend to help her ready the baby's room, look into parenting classes, and decide whether or not it is possible for the birth mother to continue going to school.
  - 3. Marriage:** A woman can marry the father of her baby and raise the child together. However, this is another big step of lifelong commitment that should be carefully evaluated. Being raised in an unloving, problematic and/or resentful marriage can be harmful to a child's emotional development.
  - 4. Joint parenting:** The woman and the baby's father may decide to raise the child together without getting married. If so, come up with a system that meets both of the parents' needs as well as the baby's. Discuss the details of how this would work and who is responsible for what. The baby's grandparents may be involved in this decision as potential caregivers.

5. **Medical expenses and Financial aid:** Alert the new mom-to-be that she can apply for **Medicaid** and **WIC** to cover her medical expenses, as well as food and living expenses if she qualifies and needs the financial help. These services can help her find jobs, finish high school, and go to a vocational school or college.
  
6. **Housing:** If her parents don't support her, or are giving her an ultimatum to do their wishes or move, and the father of the baby is not supportive, try to find a relative, friend, or anyone who has her best interests in mind. If she doesn't have support from friends or family, seek support groups with women who are in similar situations.
  
7. **A birth plan:** Having a baby can be scary when you are young and unprepared. Consult trusted adults, nurses, and midwives. Ask them about the different birthing options and what to expect. Help the woman decide on a birthing plan as well as plans after the birth.

D. Conflict resolution involves working through the emotions associated with having a baby, and working out a plan for that child. You may need to refer some families to professional counselors to work through more serious problems related to the pregnancy.

#### IV. **Being an Effective Coach**

A. Christian coaches should offer a compassionate response to unexpected pregnancy. God is clear in His Word that we are to care for the weak and fatherless and show redemption to His children who have been victimized or acted in sin.

B. In Christ, no life is a mistake and each has purpose and meaning. Provide that hope to **every** woman you encounter who feels her life has been derailed. God can use **all** things for our good when we love Him, and **all things** include unexpected pregnancies.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>J. Jaccard, T. Dodge, and P. Dittus, "Parent-adolescent Communication about Sex and Birth Control: A Conceptual Framework," in *Talking Sexuality: Parent-adolescent Communication*, ed.

S.S. Feldman and D.A. Rosenthal (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), p. 9-41.

<sup>2</sup>M.J. Nolin and K.K. Petersen, "Gender Differences in Parent-child Communication about Sexuality: An Exploratory Study" *Journal of Adolescent Research* 7 (1992): p. 59-79.

<sup>3</sup>Albert Mehrabian, *Silent Messages: Implicit Communication of Emotions and Attitudes*

(Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1981). Currently distributed by Albert Mehrabian, am@kaaj.com.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.