

Other books by Carla Crutsinger

**Thinking Smarter: Skills for Academic Success**  
**Creative Memory: An Alternative to Rote Learning**

Other books by Carla Crutsinger and Debra Moore

**Most Wanted Words: A New Approach to Spelling, Writing and Thinking**  
**ADD Quick Tips: Practical Ways to Manage Attention Deficit Disorder Successfully**

Other books by Carla Crutsinger and Katy McDaniel

**The Land of Sir Spell-A-Lot Series: A Unique Procedure Emphasizing Spelling  
Accountability and Written Expression (Volumes Grade 2-5)**  
**Fighting Math Phobias: Finding Fun in Math**  
**Confidence Power: Building Self-Esteem Through Social Skills**

Brainworks, Inc.  
1918 Walnut Plaza  
Carrollton, Texas 75006-5856  
(972) 416-9410

# Teenage Connection

## *Solving Problems Through Communication Skills*

**Carla Crutsinger**

Edited by Debra Moore



*Brainworks*<sup>®</sup>

## Copyright © 1999 Brainworks, Inc.

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of the material covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means — graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by information storage and retrieval systems — without the written permission of the copyright owner. As an exception, a reviewer may quote brief passages in a review.

### **LIMITED REPRODUCTION PERMISSION FOR STUDENT PAGES ONLY**

The publisher grants permission to reproduce up to 100 copies of any part of the Student Pages for noncommercial single classroom or individual use. Reproduction of these materials for an entire school or school system is strictly prohibited.

Revised November, 1999

First Edition, First Printing, December, 1987

ISBN 0-944662-00-5

**BRAINWORKS®**, Teenage Connection®, Thinking Smarter®, Creative Memory<sup>SM</sup>, ADD Quick Tips<sup>SM</sup>, Sir Spell-A-Lot<sup>SM</sup>, and Confidence Power<sup>SM</sup> are the trademarks of Brainworks, Inc.

Revisions by Debra Moore

Book cover by Jason Dorf and Sam Crutsinger

Illustrations by Jason Dorf

Photography by Stan Yeager



*Brainworks*®  
1918 Walnut Plaza  
Carrollton, TX 75006-5856  
(972) 416-9410

## **Dedication**

Howard Cruisinger

Student Venture  
The High School Ministry of  
Campus Crusade for Christ



*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what  
is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.  
Honor one another above yourselves.*

*Romans 12:9-10*

*New International Version*

## From the Author

For nineteen years, I've seen hundreds of teenagers who lacked confidence; during that time, I've noticed some recurring perspectives and behaviors.

### **1. These teenagers experience frustration when trying to express themselves.**

Many young people today are not equipped with skills of expression, and their opportunities to develop these skills with “face to face” communications are limited. This frustration leads to anger, an element that significantly hinders the process of communication. In order to talk to teens, we must first get past the “chips on their shoulders.”

### **2. These teenagers often view adults as “yelling and preaching machines.”**

When adults are irritated or displeased by teen behaviors, they often respond with criticism, triggering a defensive reaction from the teenager and creating conflict. Despite persistent evidence that lecturing doesn't change adolescent behaviors, adults presenting “life skill lessons” to teens frequently resort to this one-way “communication.” True communication is a two-way process, one in which both sides learn “life lessons” through talking **and** listening.

### **3. Teenagers learn best through thought-provoking mental exercises.**

During the teen years, human beings establish the value system (for good or bad) that will guide them for the rest of their lives. To establish a value system, an individual has to answer the question, “What do I want?” Before teens can consider options, make choices, and function independently, they must take this crucial step toward self-identity.

### **4. Teenagers need practice in “sorting out their thoughts” before they begin to work on problem-solving and conflict resolution.**

The question and answer format in *Teenage Connection* provides a framework for eliminating confusion by exploring and evaluating situations and ideas. Through this “sequence of thought,” young people acquire a structured method for considering the issues they will face. This format has helped many young people at Brainworks become mentally prepared for handling future challenges.

### **5. Communication skills are improved through focused “one-to-one” discussions in which comments and opinions are respected.**

Even the shyest students can “open up” in conversations if they feel safe from teasing and ridicule. The exercises contained in this workbook have no “right and wrong” answers; learning occurs by reviewing and discussing the materials. This program is designed for “silent” personalities as well as talkative types. Not every person is meant to be an extroverted chatterbox who thrives in group activities. However, people deserve a chance to develop the skills to express themselves and to get their needs met.

Our computer society has reached the point where we can't expect people to learn these skills on their own. We have seen the damage incurred when teens feel “disconnected” from society; helping individuals make better connections can change everyone's future for the better.

## Acknowledgements

Debra Moore, the Brainworks' editor, pondered each word and sentence in this book in an attempt to make this revised edition as meaningful and pertinent as possible for "students of the 21st century." Her mission involved exploring "what's in" and "what's out" in terms of trends and attitudes prevalent among young people as well as serving the conventional role of editorial "prose polisher." We are grateful for her efforts toward making *Teenage Connection* an effective program.

In this "high-tech" world, no book can go to press without the assistance of dedicated computer specialists. Tammy Sumner and Donna Walker worked diligently and without complaint—even when they faced the same pages for about the one hundredth time! Many thanks for their positive attitudes.

The original drawing by Jason Dorf help stimulate the thinking processes in the problem-solving exercises; we appreciate his assistance with this project.

Photographer Stan Yeager's eye for capturing moods and expressions resulted in the spectacular images which illustrate the activities, and we thank him for his patience as well as his gifts.

Our teenage models served as "living illustrations" for the complex emotional qualities presented in the photographs for the exercises. We want to thank the teens below for their contributions:

Dedrain Bonner	Sam Lawson
Garrett Calderwood	Sam Limon
Tina Chao	Mandy Perez
Soda Chheng	Brandon Smith
Jason Griggs	R.J. Sumner
Stephan Hunt	Brandon Tillman
Ian Jacobson	Enny Torres
Andrew Janke	Faith Varghese
Zanna Kruoch	Elizabeth Webb
Alesha Lamberth	Will Yarborough

and

Ruby, the "Pet Therapist"

# Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
• Communication in a Changing World .....	3
• Teenage Connection: Steps to Improve Communication .....	7
• Structured Discoveries: The Communication Formula .....	8
• Questions & Answers: Levels of Involvement .....	9
• Using the Formula: Instructions and Guidelines.....	10
<b>SECTION ONE: DEVELOPING AWARENESS</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Developing Awareness .....	13
Emotional Vocabulary .....	15
• Identifying Emotions and Feelings.....	16
• Vague and Clear Messages .....	17
• Connotations/Degrees of Meaning .....	18
Identity Pictures .....	19
Trigger Words .....	39
Interaction Pictures .....	55
Power-Packed Expressions.....	75
<b>SECTION TWO: BUILDING SKILLS</b> .....	<b>89</b>
Building Skills .....	91
Nonverbal Communication .....	92
• Body Language: A Message Without Words .....	94
• Body Language: Actions Speak Louder Than Words .....	96
• Facial Expressions .....	98
• Eye Contact .....	102
• Personal Appearance .....	104
• Touch .....	106
Verbal Communication: Speaking and Listening.....	109
• Positive Language .....	110
• Vocal Qualities .....	112
• Tone of Voice .....	114
• Listening Skills .....	116
• Verbal Responses: Boosters and Blockers .....	118

# Table of Contents

	Page
<b>SECTION THREE: PROBLEM-SOLVING APPLICATION.....</b>	<b>121</b>
Problem-Solving Application .....	123
Problem Situations .....	124
• Exploring Options .....	124
• Positive and Negative Self-Talk .....	126
• Anticipating the Unexpected .....	128
Character Conversations .....	130
• Role Playing: Conversations With Angry Parent .....	130
• Role Playing: Conversations With Authority Figure .....	132
“On Your Own” .....	134
• Cutting Class .....	135
• Failing A Class .....	136
• Rude Gesture .....	137
• Disrespectful Attitude.....	138
• Caught With Drugs .....	139
• Fighting With Parents.....	140
• Name-Calling .....	141
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....</b>	<b>142</b>

# Communication in a Changing World

At no time in history have there been so many ways for human beings to communicate. Prior to the 19th and 20th centuries, messages traveled no faster than the pace at which a person could physically travel, but technological innovations such as the telegraph, the telephone, motion pictures, and radio transmission changed both the speed and the nature of our messages to one another. In the last two decades, we have seen a “second wave” in the advancement of communication technology, and Americans have enthusiastically embraced the many electronic methods for staying “in touch” on an almost constant basis. The modern citizen casually comments, “I had just finished looking up product prices on the Internet when my office beeped me to say the client’s contract had been faxed to us, so I pulled out the cell phone and left a message on my assistant’s voice mail asking him to e-mail our associates.”

This plethora of technological advances has profoundly influenced our culture and has added a new urgency to the concept of “communication skills.” Employers, educators, parents, and politicians stress the importance of these skills in classrooms and in career training. Employment listings routinely put the “c” word at the top of their job descriptions, and career advancement often depends on a person’s ability to interact with clients and co-workers. Job applications typically include writing samples; in follow-up interviews, candidates have a few minutes to sell themselves to a personnel director, a feat requiring poise, quick responses, and appropriate body language.

## “A Failure To Communicate”

However, there is a disturbing corollary to the new emphasis on communication: **the ability of people in general to share ideas in meaningful discourse seems to be declining rather than improving.** Despite all our available gadgets and psychological research, we are forced to acknowledge the truth of the classic film quote, “What we have here is a failure to communicate.”

This failure is evident in almost every area of our lives, from the gridlock of city council meetings to the picket lines of contract disputes, from the anger in our classrooms to the apathy of our politics. A survey of popular media captures the essence of communication in this electronic culture: “talk shows” that resemble wrestling matches, computer games that glorify violent conflicts, films focused on sensation instead of themes and characters, and news sources selling entertainment rather than enlightenment by way of sound bites, factoids, and split-second visuals. Is it a newscast or an “infomercial?” And what is the most common response of an entire generation of young adults? A shrug and a blank look followed by, “Whatever.”

## **The Unraveling of Family Ties**

This breakdown of meaningful communication may be depressing on a cultural and social level; however, within families, it can be the basis for absolute despair. While establishing lines of communication between family members has always been challenging, the challenge has become more complex in tune with the complications of contemporary life. Most families scramble to keep up with diverse schedules and activities and devote most of their time and energy to meeting an endless series of obligations; though they reside in the same building, family members may only see each other in passing. In an essay for *Family Therapy Networker*, author Michael Ventura notes, “The average working couple in America spends only 20 minutes a day sharing time together...Is it surprising that this couple has difficulty communicating?”

To further complicate the development of family communications, divorces and remarriages have resulted in many “splintered and re-grafted” family trees. However, even stable, “nuclear” families operating under optimal conditions are not immune to the hazards of communication breakdowns. “People occupying the same quarters aren’t necessarily sharing their lives,” Ventura notes. “One family member is on the Internet, another plays video games, another watches soaps and sitcoms, another sports...another mainly news, and each may scan their own computer bulletin boards....they may have feelings toward one another...but they have precious little shared experience.”

This lack of shared experience erodes the very foundation of family communications. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, the so-called “generation gap” between parents and adolescents represented the clashing views of two distinct backgrounds: adults who had come of age during World War II and their teenage offspring who were growing up in an era of social change and political turmoil. When today’s parents recall their own teenage years, they remember the dinner table discussions about big issues such as Vietnam and protest movements, discussions that often degenerated quickly into heated arguments about rock music, clothing styles, and hair length.

## **From Generation Gap to Generation Chasm**

Social psychologists of the time decried the generation gap which polarized opinion and (apparently) divided family units. What no one seemed to notice in this hoopla of generational divisiveness was this key element: in order to fight, people have to present their opinions; in order to argue against the opposing side, people have to listen to what the opposition says. Family life may have resembled warfare at times, but at least the battlefields constituted a form of “common ground.”

Eventually, the baby boomers had babies of their own and faced the some-

times joyous and sometimes painful process called parenthood. One result of this altogether natural shift of roles was a greater appreciation for the trials and tribulations endured historically by all parents. However, many contemporary parents have also come to realize that classic parental phrases such as “Times have changed....Children today are growing up in a different world....I don’t know what my kids think or believe....” may be more than just cliches.

### **Lost Voices & Tragic Consequences**

When young people do not develop the ability to express themselves in acceptable ways and fail to bond with others, they may not establish a clear sense of personal identity or find their niche in the social structure. Communicating with other human beings is an essential component of our psychological well-being. (It’s little wonder that “solitary confinement” has long represented the harshest and most punishing level of detention in prisons.) A lifetime of non-communication creates a sense of frustration, isolation, and rejection, emotions which may reach eventual “expression” through violent, destructive behaviors. In recent years, this sad scenario has played out in many communities across the nation: the “quiet loners” who “never talked much” and “kept to themselves” suddenly explode “for no apparent reason” with resulting casualties.

Of course, these instances represent a very small minority of the population, but for every disaffected person who acts out his or her frustration, there are thousands of similarly miserable people suffering quietly from the same feelings of alienation, people whose daily lives are marked by dissatisfaction and a sense of incompleteness. Their stories may never make the headlines; nonetheless, they are tragic figures.

### **A Communication Curriculum**

The need for addressing these issues seems clear; however, only a handful of young Americans receive any kind of direct training in the combination of skills necessary for communication. Some of the more progressive districts encourage high school students to work on speaking skills; in some classrooms, students practice “interviews” to prepare for job searches or college applications. These efforts are commendable, but such programs are usually offered as “elective” rather than required classes. Eventually, school districts will be forced to recognize that preparing young people to enter the adult world involves adding a fourth “R” to core curriculums: “**R**eading ‘**R**iting, ‘**R**ithmetic, and **R**elating.”

However, learning to communicate is not a process limited to the years of public schooling. It is a process beginning at infancy with simple syllables of iden-

tification (“Ma-ma/Da-da”). If developed adequately, the process leads to more complex levels of expression, levels which involve establishing individual identity, developing peer relationships, and connecting successfully to the immense framework of life called “society.” Strengthening these connections is the aim of this workbook.

Debra Moore  
Editor

## ***Teenage Connection:* Steps to Improve Communication**

*Teenage Connection* reinforces development of communication skills through a sequence of activities designed for partners or small groups; the partners or groups can consist of teens only or “mixed teams” of teens and adults. The activities are arranged in three distinct sections, and participants who wish to derive the maximum benefit from the program should follow the suggested sequence.\*

**Step 1:** The book begins with *activities to increase awareness* of the fundamental issues of personal identity, value systems, and relationships.

**Step 2:** Next, the program provides valuable *skill-building practice* in the crucial elements of face-to-face communication, such as body language, facial expressions, vocal qualities, and eye contact.

**Step 3:** Finally, teens apply their increased awareness and communication skills in *problem-solving exercises* which reflect the real-world dilemmas and decisions faced by today’s young adults.

\*Although we emphasize using these materials in the suggested sequence, we are aware that some participants have reported success even when they have used only selected sections of the book and/or worked on exercises “out of order.”

## Structured Discoveries: The Communication Formula

Since Socrates, educators have employed guided questions for the purpose of instruction. Questions which have been carefully worded and placed in a certain sequence form a “pathway” for learners to explore identities, opinions, and value systems.

Most of the exercises in this book are divided into two components: (1) materials to be examined (photographs, words, phrases, etc.) and (2) questions concerning these materials. Just as the sections of this book have been sequenced to achieve a certain effect, so have the questions for each individual activity been arranged. The question sequence is as follows:

- A. General Questions** ask participants for general impressions, opinions, ideas, or concepts about the material.
- B. Specific Questions** require participants to draw upon their experiences or to give their personal impressions, opinions, and ideas about the material.
- C. Contrast/Expansion Questions** encourage participants to examine the issue from a different point of view or to entertain alternative ideas.
- D. Summary Awareness Questions** give participants an opportunity to increase their awareness of the ideas in the exercise as they reframe these ideas within the context of their own beliefs, feelings, and perspectives.
- E. Concluding Statements** “wrap-up” the exercises and emphasize the interactive “sharing” element. Participants draw conclusions about their exercise partners, conclusions developed by *listening* to the partner’s responses and by *interpreting* these responses.

**Note:** The importance of listening skills in communication is often underestimated. One reason people overlook these skills may be that listening *appears* passive; most people focus on the more “active” components of the process, the message and the sender of the message. However, *listening is not a passive activity*, and the brain is not merely a tape recorder which mechanically absorbs sounds.

The information we “hear” in conversations is shaped by our past experiences and emotional reactions to the information. If the person on the receiving end of a message does not capture “incoming information” accurately, that person’s response will also be inaccurate. At this point, communication stalls from lack of feedback, or, worse, it degenerates into conflict because the feedback is inappropriate.

## Questions & Answers: Levels of Involvement

The Communication Formula guides a teenager’s thinking process from the basic level of concrete thinking to upper-level abstract reasoning. Starting with general questions, young people explore topics from a “safely objective” distance without feeling threatened or becoming defensive. As questions continue, the communication partners move from general views to more specific responses, and opportunities emerge for greater “personal involvement” in the discussion—and when the teens are ready for those opportunities, they will be able to do so comfortably and confidently.

By the time the summary awareness questions are completed, the teenager has reached a new level of understanding about the topic. Of course, teenagers are (in)famous for having strong opinions, but these exercises prompt teens to investigate the origins of their opinions and to explore the ramifications of their feelings. By the end of the exercise, each teen has thought about an issue, has put these thoughts into words, has listened to another person’s thoughts, and has evaluated the meaning of the partner’s response. Quite an outcome for a series of simple, straightforward questions!

As participants respond to questions, they need to remember that these are interactive conversation practices, not written exercises. Certain activities are set up on a “fill-in-the-blank” basis to structure the statements of the communication partners. Despite the resemblance to the familiar format of a classroom “quiz,” these statements are also meant to be spoken. Some teens and adults may want to jot a few notes as they move through the exercises; however, they should not allow the active focus of the exercise to shift from discussion to scribbling answers. (People with weak listening skills are especially prone to “disengage” from spoken conversation to focus on writing, but this tendency interferes with improving listening abilities.)

A crucial aspect of the communication exercises concerns the tone of these activities. Participants should **avoid being judgmental** about comments and opinions expressed by others. The inevitable response to “passing judgment” is defensiveness—and communication stops. “Controlling the voice of criticism” may be difficult for some individuals (particularly parents and teachers!). However, these exercises are about establishing **communication** skills, not about proving “who’s right and who’s wrong.” It is unlikely that anyone can “nag” or “lecture” another person into heeding ethical standards and moral codes; indeed, the best way to help teens develop principles is through open discussions in which all views are treated with dignity and respect.

## Using The Formula: Instructions and Guidelines

In many *Teenage Connection* exercises, participants take turns asking and answering questions. The “step by step” instructions below apply to these exercises.

### Directions:

1. These exercises are designed for two participants. One person will be **Partner A** and the other **Partner B**.
2. The exercises contain two parts. The first part consists of materials to be examined, such as photographs, trigger words, or power-packed expressions; the second part consists of the Communication Formula Questions and Concluding Statements.
3. In the first half of the activity, **Partner B** selects the material to be examined by choosing the picture, word, or expression. Partners review this selection for a few seconds and “collect their thoughts” about the item.
4. **Partner A** asks **Partner B** the Communication Formula Questions and listens carefully to the responses. **Partner A** then fills in the blanks of the Concluding Statements using the information obtained from these responses.
5. In the second half of the activity, participants “swap roles.” **Partner A** looks through the remaining choices and selects the picture or word(s) to be examined next. Partners then repeat the cycle described above. (It will take about 30 minutes to go through both cycles of questions and answers.)

### Other Important Guidelines

- A. Participants’ responses should be clear and complete, they should include explanations or examples.
- B. “I don’t know” is not an acceptable answer. If a partner has to “invent” an answer based on speculation or imagination, that answer is acceptable—provided it is sufficiently explained or described.
- C. Participants should strive to be as non-judgmental as possible regarding the views and opinions expressed by others.

### Suggestions for Large Group/Classroom Situations

Break the group into two person “partnerships” and follow the general instructions above EXCEPT at the end of the activity. Then Participants will be asked to share with the group some new information or insight about themselves or their partners.