The Daily Huddle Formula:

Would you agree that there are many things in life that require our ongoing attention … our ongoing *nurturance* … to keep them going? Things like: needing to eat food pretty much every day; needing to water a plant every so often; needing to trim your toenails … you get the point. Well, relationships require our attention, too, and the lifeblood of relationships is Active Listening, Loving Support, and Validation. So, because life is so crazy-busy and people have to schedule everything from teeth cleaning to oil changes, is it very surprising to realize that "time to nurture our relationship" actually needs to be scheduled, too? Well, this is where the **Daily Huddle** comes in. Just as no one would think of baking a cake and leaving out the milk or the eggs, there are certain **"ingredients"** that should be included in the Huddle in order to make it "taste good." Here are some recommended steps and "ingredients." And remember, this Huddle Formula can be used with Autistic people as well … in fact, it might surprise you how much your Autistic child (of any age) benefits from this process!:

Rules of Engagement:

- Basic Respect: Don't burn bridges/destroy important relationships with words that cannot be taken back. If a person can't maintain Basic Respect, they should ask for a Time Out until they can.
- Understanding Does Not Have To Equal Agreement: Just because I might understand what you're saying and why you're feeling certain feelings, that does not mean I also have to agree with certain behaviors that you are allowing your feelings to drive you to do.
- The Parent Is Always The Parent: At no point in time should children expect their parent to hand over the reins of leadership, authority, and decision-making. Families that are controlled by children or teens always fall apart sooner rather than later. Parents should say "yes" to as many things as possible, but when they can't, that does not mean they are being hateful or abusive or are being a "bad" parent.

Huddle Steps & Ingredients:

(1) **Set The Stage**: Let your child know what the Huddle is *not* – i.e., it's not a time/place when you're going to lecture them, slam them with a bunch of rules, or use adult power to micromanage them. Instead, the Huddle is a time/place for everyone to feel safe, feel heard, feel valued, and to work on solving problems.

(2) **Ask**: "Is there anything you need or feel that you need right now before we engage in our Huddle time?"

(3) Active listening =

   a. **Repeating back** the content/main ideas of what you (think you) just heard the other person say.

   b. a. + include the **emotion(s)** you (think you) detected: "You feel _____ because _____." Remember anger is almost always a secondary reaction to the primary feelings of hurt, fear, sadness, insecurity, guilt, shame, embarrassment, loneliness, inadequacy, worthless/helplessness, etc.

      i. + add "You feel _____ because _____, and what you really wanted/needed instead was _____."

   c. **Validate** every thought, feeling, want, and need that you possibly can.

   d. Pause, at times, to **summarize** the main points of what you have heard in the last few minutes.

   e. **Ask** clarifying questions as needed | f. **Thank** the other person for actively sharing and listening.

(4) **Dealing with hurt**: "If I have said or done anything that you feel has been hurtful to you, I'm willing to hear you out. Please try to share your thoughts/feelings in a way that I can receive them" (**Basic Respect**).

   a. **Ask** for anything you feel that you need because of the offense/hurt. Focus on behaviors vs. attitudes.

(5) **Remember** that anyone receiving a complaint often needs **time to process** and won't be ready to provide a complete "answer" within the current Huddle time.

(6) If possible, identify 1 (no more than 3) items for a mutual **To Do List**. Write these things down and review at next Huddle. If a parent **needs to ask/tell** their child to do something, be clear and focus on behavior only.

When Daily Huddles repeatedly end in real or perceived failure, it's time to seek out some family therapy 😉