CHART

Barriers and Builders

BARRIER	BUILDER
Assuming	Checking
Rescuing/Explaining	Exploring
Directing	Inviting/Encouraging
Expecting	Celebrating
"Ism"ing	Respecting

Barrier 1: Assuming

We often assume we know what people think and feel without asking them. We also assume what they can or can't do and how they should or shouldn't respond. We then deal with them according to *our* assumptions, preventing us from discovering their unique capabilities.

Builder 1: Checking

When we check on what people actually think and feel, we discover how they are maturing in their ability to deal with problems and issues affecting them.

Barrier 2: Rescuing/Explaining

We often think we are being caring or helpful when we do things *for* people rather than allowing them to have their own experiences to learn from. Likewise, we may think we're being helpful by explaining things instead of letting people discover the explanation for themselves.

Builder 2: Exploring

Exploring enables people to learn to make choices, as well as understand themselves, others and situations through their own experiences.

Barrier 3: Directing

We don't realize how disrespectful we are to people when we direct them: "Pick that up!" "Put that away." Directives reinforce dependency, eliminate initiative and cooperation, and encourage passive-aggressive behavior (grudgingly doing the minimum amount of work, leaving as much undone as possible in order to "bug" the person doing the directing).

Builder 3: Inviting/Encouraging

Involving people in planning and problem-solving activities can help them become self-directed. People are motivated to cooperate when they participate in designing a solution to a problem or in organizing a project.

Barrier 4: Expecting

It is important to have high expectations for young people and believe in their potential. However, when that potential becomes the standard and we judge them for falling short, we discourage them. ("I thought you were more responsible than that.")

Builder 4: Celebrating

When we are quick to celebrate any movement in the direction of potential or maturity, we encourage. When we demand too much too soon, we discourage.

Barrier 5: "Ism-ing"

"Adultisms" occur when we forget that young people are not mature adults and expect them to think and act like adults. The language of "ism-ing" is, "How come you never ...?" "Why can't you ever ...?" "Surely you realize ...." "How many times do I have to tell you?" "I can't believe you would do such a thing." "You are such a disappointment." Almost anything that begins with *should* or *ought* is usually an adultism. They produce guilt and shame rather than support and encouragement. The message of an "ism" is, "Since you don't see what I see, you're at fault."

Builder 5: Respecting

Encourages interaction between adults and young people that help both understand differences in how people perceive things. This understanding creates a climate of acceptance that encourages growth and effective communication. Instead of judging people for what they don't see, we encourage them to seek understanding of themselves and others.