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Communication

As parents, it may not always be easy to communicate with your children in a way that is healthy and beneficial for everyone. Children and adolescents go through different phases in their lives where they want to communicate more or less, and stress and busy lives can make it hard for parents to always be in the right mindset to take the time to listen to what their child needs to talk about. However, with some skills and practice parents and children can communicate in a way that promotes understanding and cooperation.

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| “Through the effective use of words, parents can create a climate of love, acceptance, hope and support that can inspire children to reach their potential and can sustain them during times of stress.” – The Center for Parenting Education |

The American Psychological Association provides skills and tips for parents to help them communicate better with their children found below:

**Be available for your children**

* Notice times when your kids are most likely to talk — for example, at bedtime, before dinner, in the car — and be available.
* Start the conversation; it lets your kids know you care about what's happening in their lives.
* Find time each week for a one-on-one activity with each child, and avoid scheduling other activities during that time.
* Learn about your children's interests — for example, favorite music and activities — and show interest in them.
* Initiate conversations by sharing what you have been thinking about rather than beginning a conversation with a question.

**Let your kids know you're listening**

* When your children are talking about concerns, stop whatever you are doing and listen.
* Express interest in what they are saying without being intrusive.
* Listen to their point of view, even if it's difficult to hear.
* Let them complete their point before you respond.
* Repeat what you heard them say to ensure that you understand them correctly.



**Respond in a way your children will hear**

* Soften strong reactions; kids will tune you out if you appear angry or defensive.
* Express your opinion without putting down theirs; acknowledge that it's okay to disagree.
* Resist arguing about who is right. Instead say, "I know you disagree with me, but this is what I think."
* Focus on your child's feelings rather than your own during your conversation.

**Remember:**

* Ask your children what they may want or need from you in a conversation, such as advice, simply listening, help in dealing with feelings or help solving a problem.
* Kids learn by imitating. Most often, they will follow your lead in how they deal with anger, solve problems and work through difficult feelings.
* Talk to your children — don't lecture, criticize, threaten or say hurtful things.
* Kids learn from their own choices. As long as the consequences are not dangerous, don't feel you have to step in.
* Realize your children may test you by telling you a small part of what is bothering them. Listen carefully to what they say, encourage them to talk and they may share the rest of the story.

**Parenting is hard work**

* Listening and talking is the key to a healthy connection between you and your children. But parenting is hard work and maintaining a good connection with teens can be challenging, especially since parents are dealing with many other pressures. If you are having problems over an extended period of time, you might want to consider consulting

The Center for Effective Parenting offers some examples of phrases to show your child you’re listening to them and how to help create better communication:

* "I understand."
* "What do you think about ..."
* "Would you like to talk about it?"
* "Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?"
* "That's interesting."
* "Wow!"
* "I'm interested."
* "Explain that to me."
* “Tell me more about that”