

Talking With Your Children

By

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October is National “Let’s Talk Month”, so this fact sheet is about how to communicate positively and effectively with children. Talking with children involves the exchange of words, ideas, and feelings between two people. Communication is what we say and how we say it. We communicate with looks (scowls and smiles), with actions (slaps and hugs), with silence (warm or cold), as well as with words (kind and unkind).

Adults usually do not have any difficulty communicating with children when it simply involves giving directions on how to use scissors or explaining the danger of cars, but they do have difficulty communicating when feelings are involved—either the child’s or their own.

Good Communication leads to:

- Warm relationships
- Cooperation
- Feelings of worth

Poor Communication leads to:

- Kids who “turn off” adults
- Conflicts and bickering
- Feelings of worthlessness

Here are some winning ways of talking with children. Try them out. But remember, what works well for one person may not work for another. If these suggestions are not successful try other ways of communicating based on your own experience and understanding of your child.

Here they are:

- Communicate acceptance
- Use door openers
- Listen attentively
- Use “You-Messages” to reflect the child’s ideas and feelings
- Use more Do’s than Don’ts
- Talk With (not At) children
- Use “I-Messages” to communicate your thoughts and feelings
- Make requests simple
- Get the child’s attention before speaking to him or her
- Make important requests firmly
- Say “Please”, “Thank You”, and “You’re Welcome” to children

- Try not to interrupt and scold children when they are telling you their stories
- Don't use unkind words which tear the child down
- Use kind words to encourage and build up the child

Good communication helps children to develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others. It's never too late to improve a relationship with a child or teenager. Don't underestimate the great need that children feel—at all ages—for a warm relationship with their parents and for their parents' guidance, approval, and support. It makes life with them more pleasant now and helps them grow into adults who have good feelings about themselves and others.

For more information about talking with your child, visit the websites www.TheNationalCampaign.org; www.StayTeen.org; and www.SolutionsForYourLife.com.

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