

How do I communicate effectively with my child?



Talking frequently with your child is the key to successful parenting. Let your child know that what he/she has to say is important to you; set aside time to listen to him/her daily. In order to build the bond between parent and child, it is important for parents to be aware of the words they use and the messages they communicate silently through body language. Your body language can be communicated in a number of ways, including the way you sit or stand, through eye contact, or even how you position your arms. As an example, it would not be convincing to ask your child to tell you about his/her day while sitting on the sofa with your arms crossed, watching television. The message this body language conveys is that the child's day is secondary in importance to the television. Listed below are some ideas on how to have good, meaningful talks with children:

- **Listen to what your child has to say.** Ask questions without judging the topic being discussed. Sit or stand so that your face is at eye-level with your child's face. Give your child your full attention.
- **Reflect.** Repeat what your child has said to make sure you understand. This lets your child know that you really heard him/her, and he/she will feel better about continuing the discussion. Make sure that your words and body language are the same.
- **Share your own views and opinions.** Do not put your child down or lecture him/her, but let your own thoughts and feelings on the subject be known.
- **Encourage your child.** Do not use words or phrases that might cause your child to feel hurt or attacked.
- **Discuss.** Talk about the subject, and if a problem arises, work together to solve it. Talk about choices and assist your child in making decisions. If you become upset or angry, wait until you feel calm again before continuing the talk. A parent's actions and behaviors must match his/her words in order to get the most benefit out of talks with their children.