

Tip Sheet



Helpful Hints for Successful Communication

- ◆ Use opportunities as they arise to talk about possible difficulties (if child seems more open to talking right before bedtime, include this as a part of the nighttime routine)
- ◆ Talk, but listen more than talk (let your child finish talking before jumping to finding a solution – just listening and understanding goes a long way! Instead of finding an immediate solution, you might say things like “that sounds difficult,” or “it sounds like you are struggling with a lot right now.”)
- ◆ Notice times when kids **don’t** want to talk (words and body language will let you know)
- ◆ Start conversations – don’t just wait for them to happen (share information about your day/experiences/feelings and model this exchange of ideas/feelings)
- ◆ Turn off the “multi-tasking” button (stop everything you are doing and listen carefully to your child)
- ◆ Don’t cut off conversation before full communication happens – listen to the whole story!
- ◆ Listen, repeat (or paraphrase to make sure you understood what was said), empathize (e.g., “that must have been hard,”), and respond (non-judgementally)
- ◆ Show interest and respect in their activities (even though they might make you cringe!)
- ◆ Try to moderate your reactions – if you appear angry or defensive, kids will stop talking
- ◆ Don’t bring up past mistakes, criticize, or “get on your soapbox”
- ◆ Ask kids what they need from you in a conversation (e.g., just to listen, or to provide advice?)
- ◆ Try to keep conversations private – having witnesses can sometimes be embarrassing or may impede full disclosures
- ◆ Problem solve together (anticipate possible difficulties in given situations and problem solve around helpful reactions/solutions)
- ◆ Understand where your reactions are coming from (were you angry about something else before? Does this conversation remind you of a painful time for you?)
- ◆ Find time each week for a 1:1 activity with each child (spend time together and simply enjoy all the wonderful things about your child – play!)