



Helpful Hints for Parents: How to Successfully Communicate with your teens

- Use opportunities as they arise to talk about possible difficulties (If child seems more open to talking right before bedtime, include this as part of the nighttime routine).
- Talk, but listen more. Let your child finish talking before jumping to an attempt at finding a solution – just listening and understanding goes a long way! Instead of suggesting 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 your kids **don't** want to talk (their 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 to 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 the conversation before the communication is completed – 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-judgmentally).
- Show interest in and respect for their activities (even though they might make you cringe!)
- Try to moderate your reactions – if you appear angry or defensive, your children will stop talking.
- Don't bring up past mistakes, don't criticize, and don't “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 to kids, and 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 (e.g., Were you angry about something else earlier? Does this conversation remind you of a painful time for yourself?).
- Find time each week for a 1:1 activity with each child, play with your child, spend time together, and simply enjoy all the wonderful things about your child!