

Talking to Your Children

Effective parent-child communication is the foundation for building your child's self-esteem and fostering loving, supportive relationships with others. Keep the lines open and listen actively to what your child is saying.

- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know"
- Make your messages complete and specific
- Pay full attention to your child and maintain eye contact with him or her to enhance communication
- Avoid thinking about your reply before listening to everything your child has to say.
- Get your head physically on the same level as your child's when you talk
- Paraphrase what you heard your child say
- Give clear and consistent instructions defining the exact behaviour you are expecting
- Teach your child not to interrupt and model that behaviour yourself
- Ask what, how and why questions that promote discussion rather than questions requiring only yes or no answers
- Be alert to body language and respond just as you do with friends
- Make sure your nonverbal messages do not interfere with or contradict your verbal messages
- Use words and phrases that your children understand
- Avoid including too many ideas in your messages

Encourage responsibility

- Allow children to solve as many of their own problems as they can
- Let your child answer some of their own questions
- Do not do things for a child that they can do themselves
- Encourage your child to take risks
- Praise accomplishments
- Invite and consider your child's thoughts, feelings, and opinions on a topic
- Allow your child to make mistakes
- Assist your child in weighing choices and examining consequences
- Increase your child's responsibilities
- Praise your child without words by singing, smiles, and hugs