

Talk to your children

Talk with and listen to your child...

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 has to say...

- get your head physically on the same level as your child's when you talk
- use words and phrases that your children understand
- avoid including too many ideas in your messages
- paraphrase what you heard your child say
- give clear and consistent instructions defining the exact behaviour you want
- make sure your nonverbal messages do not interfere with or contradict your verbal messages

Praise your child for asking questions...

- 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
- teach your children 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 in kind just as you do with friends

Don't be afraid to say "I don't know"

Prepare yourself for discussing some of the toughest questions that have to do with the "facts of life" and with death

Activities

- *plan family times to talk*
- *play a treasure hunt game with pictures or words as the clues*
- *make signs and label everything in the backyard or living room for a day*
- *take time every day with young children to cuddle and talk*
- *repeat the sounds a young baby makes and express your joy with smiles and hugs*
- *play a game of acting out feelings and trying to guess them*
- *ask what your children like about a show rather than whether they like the show*

Encourage responsibility...

- allow your children to solve as many of their own problems as they can
- let your child answer some of his/her own questions
- do not do things with a child that he/she can do for himself
- 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
- communicate your support to your child
- increase your child's responsibilities
- praise your child without words by using smiles and hugs

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