

Value Every KidIdeas for Parents

Open-Door Communication

A conversation starts. Your child's upset. You're tired. Pretty soon, the conversation heats into an argument. It ends when a door slams followed by silence.

Arguments, we've all had them with our children. Sometimes it may feel like most conversations end with slammed doors. Though it can be challenging to develop the skills, being available for frequent, in-depth conversations is an important role we play in our children's lives. What we have to do is create an atmosphere of communication—an open door.

The trick with open-door communication is that we often don't realize we create invisible closed doors around us. We get preoccupied and don't pay enough attention. We're exhausted, and we nod off as our child is in midsentence. We jump to conclusions before our child says things. We assume the worst. We criticize our kids for what they tell us, so they close the door the next time out of fear or resentment.

Having an open door means having an open mind, an open attitude. It means listening to understand, not to advocate our position. It means being available when our children need us—and when they don't. It means taking good care of ourselves so that when our children want to talk, we have open ears and an open heart.

Positive Family Communication

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they and their parents communicate positively, and they are willing to seek parents' advice and counsel.

“Each child deserves to be acknowledged and cherished for the qualities that make her [or him] unique.”

– *Lee Salk, Ph.D., author of Familyhood*

QUICK TIP:

Listen more than you talk.

3 Ways to Improve Communication with Your Child

Ask Caring Questions

How did soccer practice go? How was the math test? Was the talent show fun?

Ask Your Child's Advice

Ask your child's opinion about an important matter.

Know Why You Are Angry

If there is a problem at work and you come home upset, let your child know that you are not angry with her or him.

Talk Space

Make it easy for your child to spend time talking with you. Keep an extra stool or chair in the kitchen, den, your home office, or workshop area. You'll enjoy this time together.

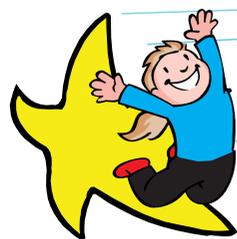


Tips that make it easier to communicate positively with your child:

- ★ Watch for hints: A child who hangs around usually wants to talk.
- ★ Don't contradict what you say by doing the opposite.
- ★ Be available, be open and be willing to drop what you're doing in order to talk.
- ★ Talk in the car when you're side by side, rather than face to face.

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VALUE EVERY KID

Raising healthy, caring, responsible children

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