

# Talk to your children

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## 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 express
- 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
- 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

## Praise your child for asking questions...

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

- *ask what your children like about a show rather than whether they like the show*
- *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*

## 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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