

# Communicating Effectively with Your Children

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- How we communicate today
  - Blackberry, cell, text, multitasking (adults).
  - MySpace, online computer games, video games, texting, cell (kids).
    - As a result, we are forgetting how to communicate “face to face” with each other.
  
- How to build communication
  - Children communicate through play and it takes time to build a relationship.
    - Play blocks, board games, card games, pretend, draw
    - Take a walk, family dinner (no TV), play sports
    - Non verbal piece – eye contact, body language
      - Playing games with children
      - If a parent listens, the child will be more likely to talk about sex, drugs, etc (heavier issues)
  - Limit amount of time children spend online, TV, video games, computer games (not interacting with people)
  - Children who feel loved are more likely to open up and talk with their parents
  
- Communicating Effectively
  - Changing the way we **listen**
    - Set the tone – are we ready to listen? If not,
      - count to 10
      - deep breaths
      - “I have to finish the dinner, but I really want to hear what you have to say so can we talk in 10 mins?”
    - Active listening
      - “So you felt hurt by those jokes”
      - Attach a feeling to what the child is saying
    - Reflective statements
      - “Wow – sounds like you and John are becoming good friends!”
      - Say what you hear the child is saying (like a mirror)
    - Modeling
      - Are you blackberrying/reading the paper while your kid is talking to you?
        - Do as I say, not as I do
      - How do you interact with your spouse/significant other?

- Kids learn about listening/communicating by watching adults interact
  - Changing the way we **speak**
    - What can I say as a parent?
      - Ask specific q's
      - Ask open ended questions
        - Instead of "How was your day?" ask, "What are you doing in your art class now?"
    - Empathy - showing you understand what your child is feeling.
      - "You sound angry about the way the teacher handled the situation." You can be a good listener and still disagree.
      - No telling how the child should feel
        - "You shouldn't be angry that you lost" "You feel angry about losing, but that does not mean you can tease your brother. What do you think is a better way to handle this?"
    - Focus on positive, don't only focus on negative
      - One client reported, "They only want to know what's going on if I'm in trouble"
    - No "but"s
      - Doing better, but ...blah, blah, blah. Child ends up tuning out the parent
    - Non-verbal communicating/talking
      - Eye contact, body language
    - Modeling
      - Do you talk about your feelings?
        - Open up – two way street, parents need to share their own thoughts and feelings
      - Give yourself a timeout when a conversation is escalating and explain to your child that this is what you are doing
    - Disagreements
      - Choice of options
        - No arguing, clear and simple
        - Tell what you want, by what time, and the consequence if it is not done
        - Incentive charts – encouraging the positive behavior
- As a result of communicating effectively, children will have...
  - Higher self-esteem
  - Greater ability to manage feelings
  - Honest and open relationships with parents