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## Don't

Don't interrupt your child.

Avoid saying "I understand how you feel." Instead identify and name your child's feeling and ask if it's accurate.

Avoid giving quick fixes or solutions when your child shares a problem.

Avoid discounting or minimizing a child's feelings, even if they seem unimportant or unreasonable to you, for example, "You're just tired, you don't mean that," "There's no reason to be upset," "Don't be such a scaredy cat, there's nothing to be afraid of."

Avoid judging your child's statements, for example, "That's a terrible thing to say about your brother."

## Family Meetings

Family meetings are held at regularly scheduled times and include all family members. The purpose is to make plans and decisions, express feelings, provide encouragement and solve problems. The meetings assure that all family members have a time to be heard, a chance to express positive feelings about each other, express concerns and complaints, make decisions, agree upon fair chores, settle conflicts and plan family recreation.

## TV, Computer and Cell Phones

While technology is a useful tool, it can become a barrier to communication. The more time children spend in front of the television/computer, the less practice they get in talking together with others. Communication when the TV/computer is on may be felt as an unwanted distraction. TV can also provide topics for family discussions and be used for family enjoyment. Think about how the TV is used in your family.

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## Resources

*How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

*How To Talk to Children About Really Important Things* by Charles E. Schaefer.

*Parenting With Love and Logic* by Jim Fay and Foster Cline.

*P.E.T. Parent Effectiveness Training* by Thomas Gordon.

*Systematic Training For Effective Parenting (STEP): Parents Handbook* by Don Dinkmeyer and Gary D. McKay.

*Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World* by H. Stephen Glenn and Jane Nelsen.

Your school social worker, counselor or psychologist can help with ideas to encourage positive communication. Your phone book also lists available resources in the blue pages under Counselors, and in the yellow pages under Marriage and Family Counselors, Psychologists, Counseling, etc.



Need help? Don't know where to start? To find help with housing, health care, food pantries, childcare, drug or alcohol abuse counseling, mental health issues, aging concerns, and many other human services. Dial 2-1-1 or go to [www.ne211.org](http://www.ne211.org).

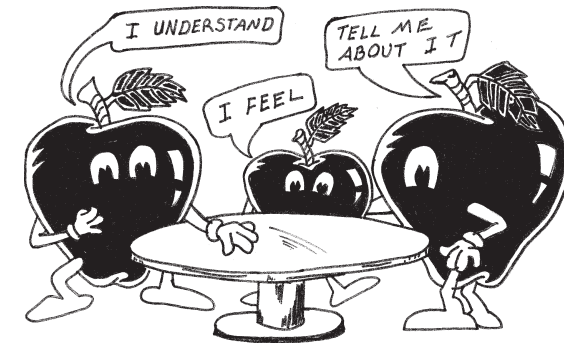
*A resource provided by LPS School Social Workers... because families matter.*

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## COMMUNICATION



*"You never listen to me!", "You don't understand!"*

Communication is such a complex subject that it is offered in college classes, yet we do most of our communicating without even thinking about it.

Everything we do or say is communication. Our behavior, facial expression, tone of voice, as well as our words and their meaning all give information to our children. Listening is also an important part of communication. When communication is misunderstood or blocked, family relationships will suffer. Mutual respect is built with positive communication. It is the foundation for healthy family relationships. Parents' communication influences how their children experience the world and how they feel about themselves.

We communicate with our children to share information and feelings and to receive information and feelings. Here are some hints to help you communicate with your children.

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## SHARING INFORMATION AND FEELINGS

### Do

Pay attention to your “body language”, how you stand, sit and your tone of voice.

Use “I messages”. “I messages” are a way of sharing how you feel without making the other person feel defensive. When giving an “I message” share the situation and how you feel about it. For example, “I feel upset when you don’t do the dishes as you agreed, **because** we don’t have clean dishes to eat on.” Rather than “**You** never do what I tell you to do!”

Use good timing. Sometimes a child is too upset, too tired or too hungry to discuss anything reasonably.

Talk with your child about events of the day. Share your feelings and values.

Allow each family member the right to call a “time out” to discussions when they become too emotionally intense. Come back to the discussion later when everyone has cooled off.

Written notes can sometimes be helpful and more easily received than words.

Communicate your love to your child in words and actions, for example, hugs, smiles, a pat on the back, a kiss good night, laughing together, playing together and greeting her after school/work.

Remember that children will model their communication and behavior after you.

### Don’t

Don’t be afraid to apologize to your child when you make a mistake.

Don’t use name calling, or “put downs”.

Don’t expect your children to always agree with you.

Avoid nagging, criticizing, threatening, lecturing and ridiculing. These are communication stoppers.

Avoid sharing details of your adult problems and relationships with your children.

**Anger** is a feeling which all family members feel from time to time. It is often one of the most difficult emotions to express in ways that will not be hurtful. It is helpful for parents to model positive expressions of anger. Parents are also encouraged to talk with their children about acceptable ways for them to share their anger.

## RECEIVING INFORMATION AND FEELINGS (Listening!)

### Do

Give your full attention to your child when he is speaking. This means stopping what you are doing, and facing him.

Agree on a time to listen if you’re not able to give your full attention at that particular time.

Listen to understand. Think more about what your child is trying to tell you than what your response should be.

Listen for feelings along with words your child is saying. Try to name what you believe your child might be experiencing, or feeling, and share that with her, for example, “I can see you didn’t care much for that show,” or “You look like you might be getting frustrated.”

Tone of voice, facial expression and posture will give you clues.

Check out your understanding of what has been said by explaining to your child what you understand her to mean and asking if you are correct.

Allow your child to express negative feelings without trying to fix them, for example, “I know you’re really sad your turtle died,” rather than “Don’t cry. He’s just a turtle. We’ll get another.”

Be willing just to be with your child at times he prefers not to talk. Your presence can be a comfort.

Help your child come up with her own options to resolve a problem, and to make predictions of the outcome of each option (problem solving.)

Know that children sometimes share feelings more readily while doing an activity such as a board game or a walk.

Use “open ended” questions to encourage sharing, rather than questions that can have a one word answer. “What happened today that felt good?”, rather than “Did you have a good day?”

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