

You are the Experts of your Family!

Communication is 20% what you say, and 80 % how you say it. This is why it's important to be aware of your body language!

Verbal *and* Non-Verbal

Non-verbal body language (posture, gestures, or facial expressions) speaks loudly. Discuss how both our words *and* our actions affect how we communicate. Pay attention to your own body language when communicating with children.

Posture and tone send a strong message and influences how children respond. Set a positive tone when you communicate and children will respond with the same attitude.

Strong communication skills support children in building healthy relationships.

Hear Their Stories

Listen carefully, with sincere interest, to your children's stories. Listen especially to hear about their unique personal strengths that show through in the story. It is important to find time to be present with your children each day.

Good listening involves facing the person who is talking, smiling, nodding and asking questions. Children continue to build their communication skills as they practice them.

Build your children up for success by letting them know how much you care.

Support and Success

Let your children know how great you think they are as often as you think of it. Children respond most to praise when they are not expecting it and when they know that you mean what you say.

Encouragement helps children cope with challenges. Children learn to take on more challenges when they are praised specifically for their efforts, not just their skills.

Healthy Communication in Families:

- ☉ Emotionally healthy families talk about feelings and reactions and develop strategies to prepare for future challenges.
- ☉ When your child is faced with a challenge, talk through the situation. Let your child tell the story, and allow him or her to come up with ideas to solve the issue first before offering your own suggestions.
- ☉ Help your child understand that his or her opinion is valued to help build a sense of personal power. For example, you can do this by asking your children questions about his or her opinion often.
- ☉ With encouragement your child will feel confident to make healthy choices of his or her own.

Communication Checks for Families:

- Use a variety of different words to describe your emotions to children. This will help children learn new ways to express themselves.
- Talk about positive, healthy ways you can express emotions in your family.
- Respect each other's feelings, even when they are different from your own.
- Encourage positive behaviours by noticing and praising them.
- Discuss how our emotions, words, and actions can affect other people.
- Celebrate each family member's talents, strengths, and uniqueness.

Door Openers:

- "What do you think?"
- "Would you tell me more about that?"
- "That's a good question."
- "What do you think that means?"
- "That sounds important to you."
- "Do you want to talk about it?"
- "I'm interested in what you're saying."
- "I'm hearing you say _____. Is that right?"

Help your child learn how to communicate with assertiveness.

Assertiveness involves making eye contact and keeping a calm voice.

In the Know:

- Your child feels special when you ask questions about his or her day. Your child might be more open to talk at certain times of the day.

When is the best time of day to talk with your child? It could be right after school or when getting ready for bed. Find what works best for your child.

- The ways you express and manage your own emotions impact your child.

Emotional expression can be role modeled by identifying your emotions out loud as you experience them and talking through solutions. You might say: "I feel very frustrated and angry about all the arguing and fighting! I am going to talk calmly until I feel better."

- Children who feel safe and respected will be more open to communicating with their parents.

Create an environment of trust without judgement when your child comes to you for help. When your child feels secure, he or she will be more likely to ask for advice in difficult situations.

- Children need to know that they will be loved no matter what.

Let your child know that his or her mistakes do not compromise the strengths that he or she possesses and that you care for him or her despite these mistakes.

Try saying: "It sounds like you're frustrated! What can we do to make this better?"

It can be hard to explain feelings: "If you tell me about it maybe I could help you."

To err is human: "You've made a mistake and you're learning; let's try again."