

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD

Here are some suggestions to help you communicate better with your school-age child:

- Set aside some quiet time to talk when you're both calm and not too tired. Don't let the television or telephone interrupt. Give your child your full attention. If he comes home from school tired, let him rest and have a snack before you try to talk about what's on your mind.
- Ask questions and try to see why she feels the way she does. In return, ask her to be patient as you tell her your thoughts.
- Listen carefully to what your child says. Be aware of not only the words he's saying, but how he's saying it. Listen for the hidden messages. What emotions are behind what he's saying?
- Show respect for your child's ideas and feelings. Stay away from hurtful teasing, blaming, name calling and put-downs.
- Use "I" messages ("I feel frustrated when you..."). Avoid "you" messages ("You always...").
- Listen to your own tone of voice. What is your body language saying?
- Be respectful of your child. Don't talk down to her.
- Don't pretend to know all the answers. Admit when you're wrong, and don't be afraid to say you're sorry if you've made a mistake.
- Praise your child when he shows good listening habits.

If you and your child have ongoing problems with communication, talk to your health care provider for guidance. Perhaps there are other problems such as language, hearing, attention problems or family issues getting in the way. Your health care provider may suggest having your child evaluated and can refer you to a family counselor. Together you can work out the difficulties and improve communication between you and your child.



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