

## Basic Principles of Good Parent/Child Communication

- Let the child know that you are interested and involved and that you will help when needed.
- Turn off the television or put the newspaper down when your child wants to converse.
- Avoid taking a telephone call when the child has something important to tell you.
- Unless other people are specifically meant to be included, hold conversations in privacy. The best communication between you and the child will occur when others are not around.
- Embarrassing the child or putting him on the spot in front of others will lead only to resentment and hostility, not good communication.
- Don't tower over your child. Physically get down to the child's level then talk.
- If you are very angry about a behavior or an incident, don't attempt communication until you regain your cool, because you cannot be objective until then. It is better to stop, settle down, and talk to the child later.
- If you are very tired, you will have to make an extra effort to be an active listener. Genuine active listening is hard work and is very difficult when your mind and body are already tired.
- Listen carefully and politely. Don't interrupt the child when he is trying to tell his story. Be as courteous to your child as you would be to your best friend.
- Don't be a wipe-out artist, unraveling minor threads of a story and never allowing the child's own theme to develop. This is the parent who reacts to the incidentals of a message while the main idea is lost: i.e., the child starts to tell about what happened and the parent says, "I don't care what they are doing, but you had better not be involved in anything like that."
- Don't ask *why*, but do ask *what* happened.
- If you have knowledge of the situation, confront the child with the information that you know or have been told.
- Keep adult talking ("You'll talk when I'm finished." "I know what's best for you." "Just do what I say and that will solve the problem"), preaching and moralizing to a minimum because they are not helpful in getting communication open and keeping it open.
- Don't use put-down words or statements: dumb, stupid, lazy: "Stupid, that makes no sense at all" or "What do you know, you're just a child."
- Assist the child in planning some specific steps to the solution.
- Show that you accept the child himself, regardless of what he has or has not done.
- Reinforce the child for keeping communication open. Do this by accepting him and praising his efforts to communicate.