

about communication

Thoughts

SOME

HELPING YOU BE PRODUCTIVE & WELL
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Communication is the glue that holds our relationships together. How effectively we communicate with each other directly impacts the overall emotional tone within a family and between family members. Here are a few suggestions to promote more positive and meaningful interactions with your loved ones.

- Listen **actively** by offering your undivided attention, don't interrupt, and resist forming judgments while the other person is talking.
- Maintain **eye contact** to help you focus on the conversation and enhance the connection.
- Appreciate your child's feelings and point of view. **Empathy** opens ears!
- Be **brief**, clear, and specific. Avoid lecturing.
- Make **open-ended** queries like:
 - "How can I help?"
 - "Tell me more about that."
 - "How did it make you feel?"
- Start conversations from a place of **calm** rather than agitation.
- **Acknowledge the good** so positive interactions outnumber negative ones.
- Listen **proactively** to understand rather than reactively to defend yourself.
- **Focus on the problem** not the person when sharing concerns.
- Express how the behavior makes *you* **feel**.
- Most people want to be heard and **validated**. Avoid jumping in with a solution or quick advice to solve a problem. The goal is to **listen**.
- Know your **emotional triggers**. Practice a new response so your family doesn't learn how to derail you away from other important conversations.
- **Model** what you desire from your children. They are watching!
- **Accept criticism** without becoming defensive.
- **Acknowledge when you are wrong** or make a mistake.
- Be **honest** about your fears and insecurities. It's okay to be human...flawed.
- Pay attention to **non-verbal** communication and listen-between-the-lines.

Being as open, honest and vulnerable as possible when communicating with your adolescents will go a long way to improving the quality of your parent/child conversations and building trust. Once the quality of the communication improves, a more productive and meaningful connection can grow.



Being vulnerable is easier for some than for others. Some parents—not to mention some kids—find it very uncomfortable and threatening to openly express their feelings in a face-to-face conversation. If this sounds like someone in your family try writing notes back and forth.

Get a spiral notebook or blank journal that can be used to pass a conversation back and forth. For instance, mom or dad can write out their observations and concerns, and ask some open-ended questions, and end with an invitation for the child to respond back either in person or in writing. Then put the book someplace where only that child will see it. (You might also try texting each other, even if you are sitting side by side on the same sofa.)

Don't rush this. It may take a few days for your children to process what you've shared and to decide if, when, and how they want to respond. The nice thing about this technique is that it feels more low stakes than a face-to-face conversation. This can be a game changer for both parents and children who keep putting off what they perceive will be difficult and challenging conversations.