

# Talking to Your Child

## Tips for Parents

From birth to the teenage years and beyond, communication with your child is very important. When you talk with (not at) your kids, you reinforce good behavior, and help to eliminate bad behavior. It can build your child's confidence and self-esteem.

**Make time to talk to your child!**  
**WHEN can we communicate? Do you sometimes feel too busy with work and schedules to focus on communicating with your child? Take advantage of downtime and make a point to talk while:**

- Traveling in the car
- Walking to or from the bus-stop
- Waiting for a sibling at sports practice, music lessons, etc.

When talking with your child, get down to his level (if necessary) and maintain eye contact. WHAT can we talk about?

- What was the favorite part of your day? The worst?
- Did anything worry you today?
- Who did you spend time with today?

These conversations let your child know you care about them, are interested in their ideas and experiences, and set the tone for more difficult conversations when/if something happens later.



Allow your child to finish talking and really listen to what he or she is saying.

- Label your child's behavior and not your child. "It hurts my feelings when you talk to me that way" instead of "You are a bad child." Use "I" statements to tell your child what upsets you. "When you didn't call me, I felt worried and angry."
- Start sentences with a positive statement. "Kate, you are a smart girl. Now let's talk about a way to get your homework done."
- Reinforce your child's feelings. "Alex, I know you want to play another video game, but you can play one after your homework is finished."
- Use feeling words when you praise your child's behavior. "I am so happy you put away your toys." Use "you" statements to point out good behavior. "You have done a great job with that painting."