



COMMUNICATING WITH OUR KIDS

Be there:

- Know the time when kids are most likely to talk, e.g., bedtime, before dinner, in the car and be available at those times
- Start the conversation: demonstrate to your kids that you care about what is happening in their lives
- Find time each week for a one-on-one activity with each child, and avoid scheduling other activities during that time
- Learn about your child's interests, e.g., favorite music and activities, and show interest by asking about them and remember what they tell you (work at this!)
- Initiate conversation by sharing what you have been thinking about rather than beginning a conversation with a question

Listen, and make sure your kids know you are serious about understanding them

- When your children are talking about concerns, stop whatever you are doing and listen *intently*
- Express interest in what they are saying without being intrusive
- Listen to their point of view, even when it is difficult to hear
- Let them complete their point before you respond – it is not a contest to win
- Repeat what you heard them say and ask them if you have it right – this is to ensure that you understand them correctly

Talk so that your kids will listen to you!

- Soften your strong reactions; kids will immediately tune you out if you appear angry or defensive
- Express your opinion without putting down theirs; acknowledge that it is okay to disagree
- Resist arguing about whom is right; instead say, "I know you disagree with me, but this is what I think!"

Focus on your kid's feelings rather than your own during your conversation

Important Points To Keep In Mind:

- Ask your kids what they may want from you, such as advice, simply listening, helping dealing with feelings or help solving a problem
- Kids learn by imitating; most often, they will follow your lead in how they deal with anger, solve problems, and work through difficult feelings = so do your own self-improvement work!

Talk to your kids – do not lecture, criticize, threaten or say hurtful things, and, give yourself permission to apologize – it is not a weakness to admit you were wrong

- Kids learn from their choices; if consequences are not dangerous, *work on staying out of it!*
- Realize your kids may test you by telling you a small part of what is bothering them; listen carefully, encourage them to talk, and they may share the rest of the story
- Tell your kids regularly *what you admire about them!*

Effective Parenting is hard work:

- Listening and talking are the keys to healthy connections
- Maintaining a good connection with teens is challenging, parents cope with many pressures
- If you are having serious problems, or they last a long time, consider consulting a mental health professional