



## DEVELOPING YOUR CHILD'S COMMUNICATION SKILLS

**Good communication skills will help your child develop self confidence, a good sense of self-worth, and better relationships with you and others.**

Communication is the building block of all relationships. It is through expressing themselves that children reveal their thoughts, feelings, and connect to others.

**Communication is what we say and how we say it.**

Like adults, children communicate with looks (frowns or smiles), with actions (hugs or punches), with silence (warm or cold), as well as with words (kind or unkind). Good communication involves paying attention to all of these types of expression.

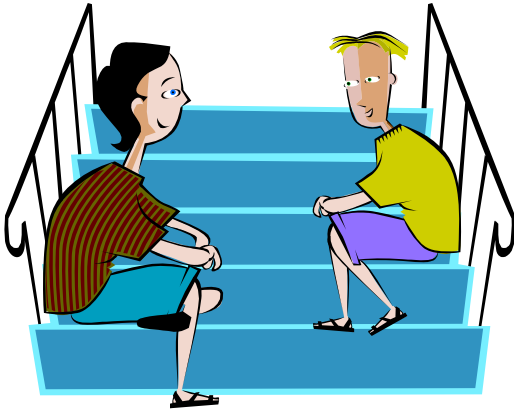


**Good communication skills consist of:**

- Sending a clear message
- Giving your full attention to the person sending the message
- Paying attention to all the ways the message is being sent

**Children are not born good communicators; they have to be taught the skills.**

- Teach your children to express



themselves by listening to them. Listen carefully and pay attention to all the ways they are sending a message to you.

- Teach your children to listen by removing distractions when you are talking to them. Turn off the television, ask them to look at you, or have them come in the same room with you while you talk to them.



- Teach your children to check out what they think they heard. Ask them to repeat back to you, in their own words, what they heard from you. If they get it wrong, try again. If they get it right, praise them for this—"Good listening!"
- Teach your child to pay attention to the many ways people express themselves. Ask your child, "What does my face tell you?" or "How do you think your sister is feeling right now?"

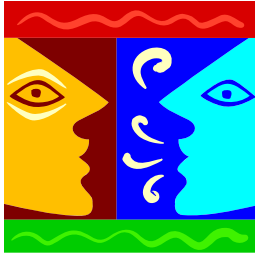


### **Use good communication skills yourself.**

Children learn how to communicate by communicating with us and watching how we communicate with others. We need to be good role models and take the time to listen and clearly send our own messages.

### **Listen actively.**

Active listening is a way of listening to your child that lets him know you are



working to understand his thoughts and feelings.

- Make sure your body language says you are interested and listening. Make

eye contact with your child, turn your body toward her, and nod as she is talking to let her know you are listening.

- Reduce any distractions that will keep you from focusing on her message. Or postpone listening until you can focus on the child—"I will be better able to listen to you once I am done with \_\_\_\_."

- Listen for the content and the feelings behind your



child's words. Is he expressing joy, sadness, excitement or anger—either through his words or body language?

- Check-out what your child said: "What I am hearing from you is....." "It sounds like ..... was very upsetting for you."
- Focus on listening, rather than responding. Postpone offering advice to your child until all his thoughts have been expressed.



### Send a clear message.

How we send messages to our children is important. Children are more likely to listen when the message focuses on the action. "I-messages" help us to send clear messages to our children.

### Use "I-messages" to communicate your thoughts and feelings.

"I-messages" tell your child what you want him to do.

- "I need help picking up these things."
- "I want you to finish all your homework before you play."



"I-messages" teach your child that his actions affect you and others.

- "I get upset when I see mud on the floor."
- "I have a hard time understanding you when you are screaming."



**Avoid "you-messages" to communicate your thoughts and feelings.**

- When we use "you-messages," we are focusing on the child rather than the action.
- "You-messages" often shut down communication with children.
- "You-messages" do not tell the child what you want them to do.



- "You-messages" can lower a child's sense of self-worth.  
"You never listen when I talk to you."  
"You're dumb."

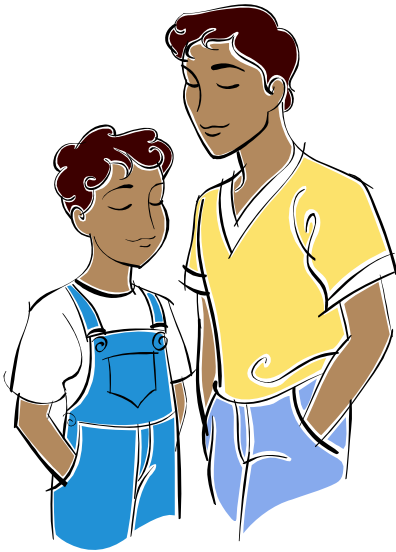
**Save "you-messages" for checking out your child's thoughts and feelings.**

- "You-messages" can be helpful when we are listening to children and want to check out the message we are getting from them.  
"You look sad. Is it because you lost your game?"  
"Your tone of voice tells me how happy you are."

**"You-messages" encourage your child to express her thoughts and feelings openly to you.**

- When your child feels heard she is more likely to tell you about her sad as well as happy feelings.
- Hiding distressing feelings can be harmful to children.
- Children who feel heard are less angry, stressed, and more open to resolving problems.





### Teach your child to use "I-messages."

- "I-messages" not only help us to focus on the action, but they also help us to understand ourselves.
- When we use "I-messages," we are letting others know what we feel and think.
- Using I-messages will make your child a better communicator—he will be able to clearly express his feelings and thoughts.
- Teach your child to talk about actions rather than people.  
"I don't like it when the other kids leave me out," rather than  
"They're stupid, who wants to play with them anyway?"

- Teach your child to let others know how their actions affect her.  
"I feel mad when you take my things"—rather than "Thief, give me that!"

### For more information...

*How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk*, by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish.

I hope you find this information helpful.  
Best wishes for a good month ahead!

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Good communication skills help everyone.

- Look inside for key skills to model and teach to your child.



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