

MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

HOW TO GET YOUR CHILD TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
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Improving communication with your child is essential for building a strong and trusting relationship.

Here are a few practical tips to enhance parent-child communication:

Encouraging

In the context of active listening, encouraging is not about giving a pep talk or patting your children on the back, but rather prompting them to talk. Encouraging takes several verbal and nonverbal forms:

- Verbal responses - communication that is understandable for your child and appropriate to their age, that makes them feel valued and loved.
- Nonverbal communication includes smiles, body language, eye contact and tone of voice.
- Repeating back a few words your child says to let your child know you are paying attention.

Welcome Emotions:

Children often experience intense emotions. Instead of dismissing or suppressing their feelings, create a safe space for them to express themselves. When your child is upset, listen empathetically, and acknowledge their emotions. Remember, you are the person they trust enough to share their tears and fears with. By welcoming their emotions, you help them move through those feelings and strengthen your connection.

Asking Questions with Intention:

Asking questions in response to what your children tell you demonstrates that you are paying attention and are interested. Moreover, the strategic use of questions (and the answers they elicit) can help provide important clarification and increased understanding for both you and your children. However, be mindful not to barrage your children with or overuse questions. It is a conversation, not an interrogation.

For example, use questions to: Ask for clarification when you are unclear about what your child said: “I am not sure I understand. Can you tell me more about what your teacher said?” Or to gather additional information and separate essential facts and feelings from side issues: “What was it about how your friend acted that makes you feel sad?”

Slow Down and Savor the Moment:

Use every interaction as an opportunity to connect. Share moments with your child throughout the day. Smell the strawberries together before making a smoothie and savor bedtime hugs and chats. Be fully present with your child several times each day, reinforcing your bond. Remember, healthy communication is a two-way street. By encouraging your children to talk, you indicate your continued interest in what they have to say (and your continuing interest in them—period). This strengthens the communication process and the connection between you.

Excerpt from: [Communication Skills That Improve Connection With Your Kids | Psychology Today](#)

Excerpt from: [Nonverbal communication with children | Raising Children Network](#)