

# Communication Tips for Parents

Healthy communication is key to building a strong relationship with your child. Frequent, ongoing conversations will teach children how to:

- ▶ Establish empathy and connect with others
- ▶ Express feelings appropriately
- ▶ Cope with disappointment and setbacks
- ▶ Develop problem-solving and negotiating skills

Try these tips for communicating effectively with your child:

- ▶ **Be available.** Set aside at least ten minutes a day to talk one-on-one with each of your children. Try pairing your daily chat with a shared activity like doing the dishes, taking the dog for a walk, or commuting to and from school.
- ▶ **Listen.** If a child believes that you are really listening, they will be more likely to talk to you about important issues or share worries and fears.
- ▶ **Restate and reframe.** It may be difficult to discern what a child is feeling or understand why they are upset. Restating your child's words is a good way to figure out what is bothering them. If a child is stuck in negative or catastrophic thinking, help them brainstorm other outcomes.
- ▶ **Demonstrate respect.** Sometimes, kids ramble. Instead of dismissing their chatter, try asking clarifying questions. Be patient when a child blows



things out of proportion (from an adult point of view) or becomes strongly attached to a TV show, fictional character, or imaginary friend.

- ▶ **Encourage exploration.** Support your child's interests even when they don't align with your own. Keep in mind that childhood fascinations could lead to a lifelong hobby or even a career.
- ▶ **Be a good role model.** If you yell, your child will yell, and if you complain, your child will think that complaining is the way to deal with problems. Your example sets the tone.
- ▶ **Apologize.** If you make a mistake or say something in frustration or anger that you later regret, apologize. Acknowledging your mistakes will clear the lines of communication and keep small hurts from turning into big ones.

If you are struggling with a parenting challenge, LifeMatters can help. Call 24/7/365.

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