



PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of second-grade students

Parent Talk

How do you talk to your children?

Do you talk to them or with them?

Stop and listen. Would you want someone to talk to you that way? Would you allow your child to use the tone you use when speaking to them? Record yourself for an hour or two and listen alone later to check what your child is hearing from you.

Effective styles of parenting are based on mutual respect and open communication. Parent and child allow each other to express feelings and ideas honestly, without fear of being rejected.

Guides to Effective Communication

To improve communication with a child, a parent can:

- Test the water by asking if your child wants to talk. For example, “Would you like to talk about how you are feeling?”
- Learn to use responsive or reflective listening techniques. These methods provide a mirror for the child to see himself or herself more clearly. For example:
 - Child: “I don’t know whether to go to Charlotte’s birthday party or go swimming with Max.”
 - Parent: “Sounds like you’re having trouble deciding.”
- Begin with the child’s feelings. For example:
 - “You seem upset ...”



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Stress Less Activity

Stress is part of everyone’s life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Creating can be stress reducing. Pound together a bird house, build with Legos or fashion an obstacle course with found bits and pieces. Use both your imagination and your muscles to make something and enjoy the process.

- ❑ Pay close attention to the child when he or she is speaking.
Put the phones and electronic devices away and savor the conversations.
- ❑ Maintain good eye contact and sit near the child while he or she is talking.
- ❑ Accept the child as a person with feelings. Allow negative feelings as well as positive feelings to be expressed. For example:
Child: "I don't like to go to school."
Parent: "Something is bothering you about going to school."
- ❑ Understand that feelings are ever-changing, not permanent.
- ❑ Know that expressing a feeling, especially a negative feeling, helps a child deal with that feeling.
- ❑ Treat your child with respect and dignity.
- ❑ Learn how to express yourself and your feelings with a responsive "I" message. For example: "I get startled when the door slams."



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- ❑ Before you speak, decide if something is your problem or your child's problem, then proceed with solutions for those problems that belong to you.
- ❑ Allow for failure and success. Allow the child to work out their feelings. Avoid attempts to "fix it" or "rescue" your child.
- ❑ Avoid threatening, judging, lecturing or ridiculing.

Here are some common communications that will cause a child to feel inadequate and unacceptable.

"Do as you are told NOW!"

- Message sent: Commands and threats tell the child that their feelings or needs are not important. This usually causes resentment, rejection and hostility from the child.

"You did that just to get my attention."

- Message sent: The parent knows the child's motives/ thoughts and usually is right. The child feels threatened, frustrated or embarrassed.

"You never do it right!"

- Message sent: The child is inadequate, unworthy, bad. The child may become defensive and resentful.

"You shouldn't feel that way."

- Message sent: The child's judgment and feelings are not to be trusted. This may cause feelings of guilt, obligation and shame.

"Nice going. Those grades are going to get you nowhere fast."

- Message sent: The child is bad, unloved and not appreciated. Sarcasm is harmful to everyone and especially confusing to young children.

Research indicates that the permissive (no rules, little guidance) and authoritarian (strict rules, very controlling) styles of parenting result in more problems for a parent and child as the child grows. Children are best able to grow and learn in a home that uses a positive, authoritative approach. Allowing children to express themselves respectfully and openly communicate with you is an important part of a positive approach.



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