

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD OR TEEN

Be Available

Be around when your kids are most likely to talk— for example, at bedtime, before or during dinner, in the car— put the phones away and listen.

Spend time with them doing things that don't require talking; like hiking, cooking, or going to a movie. It's important for them to have positive experiences and be in proximity of you without worrying that you will ask intrusive questions or call them out on anything.

Listen

When your children are talking about concerns, stop what you are doing and listen. Show interest in what they are saying without being intrusive. Listen to their point of view, even when it's difficult to hear. Let them complete their point before you respond. Repeat what you heard them say to ensure that you understand them correctly. Remaining open and listening with interest will encourage your children to be more open with you.

Control Your Emotions

Soften strong reactions; kids will tune you out if you appear angry or defensive. Express your opinion without putting theirs down. Resist arguing about who is right. Instead say, "I know you disagree with me, but this is what I think." It's easy for tempers to flare when your child or teen is being rude but don't respond in kind. Focus on your child's feelings rather than your own during your conversation. If you are both too upset to talk, hit pause until you have both calmed down enough to talk.



Validate Their Feelings

It is often our tendency to try to solve problems for our kids, or downplay their disappointments. But saying something like "She wasn't right for you anyway" after a romantic disappointment can feel dismissive. Instead, show kids that you understand and empathize by reflecting the comment back: "Wow, that does sound difficult."

To get help: Call your local mobile crisis team 24/7 at **1-877-380-3621**. You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Line at **1-800-273-8255** or reach out to the Crisis Text Line by texting "MN" to **741741**. All of these options will connect you with trained crisis counselors.

For more information please visit www.apa.org or www.childmind.org. You can also contact Brina Ellison, Youth Mobile Crisis and Crisis Text Line Coordinator, at brina@stellher.com