



Positive Communication

“How Your Words Make a Difference.”

Communicating with your child in a positive manner is one of the most important things you can do as a parent, and communicating is more than just talking. Communication includes your tone of voice, the words you choose, the setting you speak in, the volume of your voice, and your body language. It involves both parties speaking and listening.

Positive communication is a wonderful tool to reinforce good behavior and eliminate bad behavior. It builds self-esteem and nurtures relationships. Children's self-esteem is very closely tied to their interaction and relationships with their parents. All children deserve to feel loved and accepted and you can communicate those feelings simply by the way you choose to speak.

Get Your Child's Attention

Children have a limited attention span and ability to focus. When you are speaking with your child, engage them in eye contact. Ask that they look at you when you are speaking and return the favor. Try to get on the same level as your child physically and mentally. Choose words that your child will understand. If a word may be unfamiliar to them, take time to explain what the word means. At the same time, try to be close to the same eye level as your child. Stoop down, sit next to them, or get in another position where you will be more physically equal.

Be Polite

We start learning manners very early in our life. Saying “please” softens our requests and when followed with a specific request for action, it can really get kids moving. Adding a “thank you” in closing with your request reinforces that you expect the child to complete the job. Be careful to avoid taking out frustration or exasperation on your child. Work to control your emotions and speak your requests clearly and firmly without sounding angry or pleading.

Prepare to Repeat

Accept that children often need to be told the same thing over and over before they can commit it to memory. This is not necessarily a sign of defiance; it is more likely a sign of immature development. If you have to repeat a request or direction, try to keep the exasperation out of your voice. Instead, focus on making sure the child understands what behavior you want to see and why that behavior is important to you.

Watch for Body Language

Research shows that as much as 90% of communication is nonverbal. Your stance, facial expression, eye contact, and other nonverbal cues say far more than the actual words you speak. Watch your body language and pay attention to your child's nonverbal communication as well. When a child is obviously upset, try to find a quiet place to talk about what is bothering them.

Choose Your Words Carefully

A carelessly chosen word spoken in haste can have great impact on a child's self-esteem. Take care choosing your words and do not let stress or frustration cause you to use negative words that may hurt your child's feelings. Be thoughtful when redirecting your child. Focus on the behavior you want changed, not the personality or attributes of the child.

Listen Carefully

Listening is not passively waiting your turn to speak. It involves giving the speaker your full attention and focusing on what they are saying. Listen to your children without cutting them off. Make eye contact. Repeat back what you have just heard so your child knows you understand. Be patient when younger children are speaking. It can take them longer to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

