



## COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR PARENTS AND TEENAGERS

"You never listen to me" is a complaint heard as often from children as parents. Good communication helps children and parents to develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others. Try these tips:

- Teach children to listen...gently touch a child before you talk and say their name.
- Speak in a quiet voice...whisper sometimes so children have to listen...they like this.
- Look children in the eyes so you can tell when they understand...bend or sit down to become the child's size.
- Practice listening and talking...talk with your family about what you see on TV, hear on the radio or see at the park or store...talk with your children about school and their friends.
- Respect children and use a courteous tone of voice...if we talk to our children as we would our friends, our youngsters may be more likely to seek us out as confidants.
- Catch children and teens being good...praise them for cooperating with you or their siblings, or for doing those little things that are so easy to take for granted.
- Use door openers that invite children to say more about an incident or their feelings: "I see," "Oh," "Tell me more," "No kidding," "Really," "Mmmhmmmm," "Say that again, I want to be sure I understand you."
- Praise builds a child's confidence and reinforces communication...unkind words tear children down and teach them that they just aren't good enough.
- Children are never too old to be told they are loved. Saying "I love you" is important...writing it in a note provides the child with a reminder that he can hold on to.
- Give your undivided attention when your child wants to talk to you. Don't read, watch TV, fall asleep or make yourself busy with other tasks.
- Talk about fun things (your child's interests), not just serious themes.
- Let your teen or child know they can talk to you about anything and that their safety is your top priority (i.e. even if a rule was broken you would rather they seek help from you than end up in a more dangerous situation) Reflect feelings: "It makes you sad that..." or "You are angry because..."
- Avoid minimizing emotions: "It's no big deal!" or "You're okay" or "At least..." Often kids and teens just need you to hear them, not try to "fix" their feelings.