

Tips for Effective Communication with Your Children

from *The Self-Aware Parent*, by Cathy Cassani Adams

1. Make yourself a priority - Sounds like a paradox, but to be a good listener you need to take care of yourself. If you are running on empty and constantly overwhelmed with your own concerns (worries, commitments, stress) it's hard to be an effective listener. Taking care of YOU is the first step toward healthy communication with your kids.
2. Be a good listener - Demonstrate that you are really listening. Stop what you are doing (put down that phone), make eye contact, and give your children the gift of your attention. Good listeners also let go of the constant need to fix. There are times when offering suggestions and lessons are valuable, but children also appreciate just being heard.
3. Allow for feelings - Don't tell your children how to feel, just let them tell you how they feel. Understand that the full range of emotions is normal. Sometimes children get angry, sometimes they get sad. Expecting them to be happy and gracious at all times is unrealistic. Let them know that it is safe to turn to you if they are feeling strong emotions and offer them tools to deal with challenging feelings.
4. Appreciate their experience - See questions, issues and events from a child's point of view. Parents often tell their children that something they say or feel is silly, unimportant or small, but remember the worldview of a young person - everything is new and big. Respect who they are right now and meet them where they are.



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