**Communication with Children**

**Developing good communication with your child**

When you work on developing good communication with your child, it helps your child to develop skills for communicating with you and other people. It also builds your relationship, because it sends the message that you value your child’s thoughts and feelings. Here are some ideas to develop good communication with your child:

* Set aside time for talking and listening to each other. Family meals can be a great time to do this.
* Turn off phones, computers, and televisions when you and your child are communicating. This shows that you are completely focused on the interaction or conversation.
* Talk about everyday things as you go through your day. If you and your child are used to communicating a lot, it can make it easier to talk when big or tricky issues come up.
* Be open to talking about all kinds of feelings, including anger, joy, frustration, fear and anxiety. This helps your child develop a ‘feelings vocabulary’. But it is best to wait until you have calmed down from strong emotions like anger before you talk about them.
* Tune in to what your child’s body language is telling you and try to respond to non-verbal messages too. For example, ‘You’re very quiet this afternoon. Did something happen at school?’
* Involve your child in conversations – this could be as simple as asking, ‘What do you think about that, Gabriel?’

Be willing to stop what you are doing and listen to your child. Often you cannot predict when your child will start talking about something important to them.

**Active listening with children**

Active listening is key to good communication and great for your relationship with your child. That is because active listening shows your child that you care and are interested in them. It can also help you learn and understand more about what is going on in your child’s life. Here are some ideas on how to practice active listening with your child:

* Use your body language to show you are listening. For example, face your child and make eye contact. If your child likes to talk while doing activities, you can show you are listening by turning to look at your child and getting close to them.
* Watch your child’s facial expressions and body language. Listening is not just about hearing words, but also about trying to understand what’s behind those words.
* Build on what your child is telling you and show your interest by saying things like ‘Tell me more about ...’, ‘Really!’ and ‘Go on ...’.
* Repeat or rephrase what your child has said from time to time. This lets your child know you are listening and helps you check what your child is saying.
* Try not to jump in, cut your child off, or finish sentences – even when your child says something strange or is having trouble finding words.
* Do not rush into problem-solving. Your child might just want you to listen, and to feel that their feelings and point of view matter.
* Prompt your child to tell you how they feel by describing what you think they are feeling – for example, ‘It sounds like you felt left out when Felix wanted to play with those other kids at lunch’. Be prepared to get this wrong and ask your child to help you understand.

When you show your child how to be a good listener, you help your child develop their listening skills too.

**Encouraging your child to listen**

Children often need some help learning to listen, as well as some gentle reminders about letting other people talk. Here are some ideas to help with your child’s listening skills:

* Be a good role model. Your child learns how to communicate by watching you carefully. When you talk with your child (and others) in a respectful way, this gives a powerful message about positive communication.
* Let your child finish talking and then respond. This sets a good example of listening for your child.
* Use language and ideas that your child will understand. It can be hard for your child to keep paying attention if they don’t understand what you’re talking about.
* Make any [instructions and requests](https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/behaviour/behaviour-management-tips-tools/requests-instructions) simple and clear to match your child’s age and ability.
* If you need to provide constructive feedback, give some positive messages at the same time. Your child is more likely to listen to praise than to criticism or blame. For example, ‘You’re usually so good at remembering to put your lunchbox in the dishwasher. Could you remember tomorrow please?’

https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/connecting-communicating/communicating/communicating-well-with-children  **Between Families Training Insert
Communication with Children**

**January 2021**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN TO YOUR ASSIGNED FOSTER CARE WORKER FOR ½ HOUR CREDIT**

 **Printed Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Questions:

1. When you work on developing good communication with your child, it helps your child to develop skills for with you and other people
2. What three things should you turn off when you and your child are communicating?

1) 2) 3)

1. Why is it important to talk about everyday things throughout the day?
2. You should be willing to stop doing what you are doing and listen to your child. **True/False**

1. Active listening shows your child that you care and are interested in them. It can also help you learn and understand more about what is going on in your child’s life. **True/False**
2. Repeat or rephrase what your child has said from time to time. This lets your child know
	1. You are listening and helps you check what your child is saying.
	2. You did not hear what your child was saying
	3. You are trying to rush the conversation
3. You should jump in, cut your child off, or finish your child’s sentences **True/False**?
4. Do not rush into problem-solving. Your child might just want you to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that their feelings and point of view matter.

1. What gives a powerful message about positive communication.
	1. Looking at your phone while child is talking
	2. When you talk to your child in a respectful way
	3. When you talk to others disrespectfully
2. [Make any instructions and requests](https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/behaviour/behaviour-management-tips-tools/requests-instructions) simple and clear to match your child’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.