

Parenting Without Pressure

TIPS FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION

Always treat children with courtesy, respect and understanding.

Good communication flows from mutual respect and understanding among family members. When children are treated with the same courtesy and understanding that parents give their best friends, it sends a strong message of love and support. Be generous with comments like *please* and *thank you*. Make requests instead of giving orders. And always be quick to say, *I am sorry*, when you are wrong.

Listen actively by repeating your child's feelings with empathy and understanding.

Simple acknowledgment of the child's feelings will always get you a lot of mileage. Not only do you validate the child, but you put him in a position to then hear what you have to say. Remember, you don't have to agree with a child's feelings in order to describe what he is feeling. You simply put yourself in your child's shoes without judging, offering advice, or asking a lot of questions.

Cool off before you talk, and choose your words carefully.

Children really do believe what a parent tells them, and they will always reach up or stoop down to parental expectations. Therefore, make sure that what you say is positive and builds up rather than tears down.

Make sure your non-verbal communication is positive.

Making sure your non-verbal communication is positive is important. Dr. Albert Mehrabian states in his book *Silent Messages* that 55 percent of communication is non-verbal body language. Thirty-eight percent is tone of voice. Only seven percent is content. Check your body language and the tone of your voice. Make sure both are positive.

Remember, if you want to be heard, you first must be available and listen.

Take the time to make yourself available. Only when a child genuinely feels he has been heard and understood does a parent have a prayer that the child will listen. Create an atmosphere that is safe for kids to explore their thoughts and feelings even if you don't agree.

Hold Weekly Family Meetings.

Weekly family meetings provide all family members with a platform to be heard and understood. They also create a format for families to formulate rules, determine operating boundaries and deal with problem areas while they are small.