



CHILDREN'S
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Family Education Program materials and podcasts, and information on CHS programs can also be found on our website at www.chs-ca.org.



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COMMUNICATION

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD



C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A

Communication involves expressing your thoughts, feelings, and ideas. An essential part of positive communication is listening. With children, positive communication can help them feel comfortable talking about their thoughts and feelings openly. They can also learn to respect the opinions, feelings, and thoughts of other people. As parents and child care providers, you can take important steps to build healthy communication with your children.



Several elements are needed to build healthy communication skills: Having a loving attitude, listening, and understanding what is being said. Your child can learn to be a positive communicator through your example. By practicing positive communication skills, children can grow to be responsible and thoughtful individuals.

★ TIPS FOR HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

Parents and caregivers can help children share their questions, thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a positive and appropriate manner by:

- Listening patiently: Your child may not understand his own behavior or the expected, appropriate behavior. Help him understand by listening to what he says before correcting or disciplining him.
- Clarifying: Repeat back to your child what she said. Check if you understand her correctly. This will help your child feel you are listening to her.
- Allowing children to solve their own problems: Gently guide your child to discover his own solutions by acknowledging his thoughts and actions. Respond with brief answers, such as "Yes" or "Really?" This encourages your child to express emotions with words and find solutions to concerns. Asking your child open-ended questions also helps him find answers, for example, "How would you feel if that happened to you?"
- Speaking in a calm and respectful tone: This will help your child learn to listen and speak appropriately. A loud, harsh voice may cause your child to be too scared or angry to listen.
- Choosing the best times to talk about important issues: If your child is hungry or tired, she may find it difficult to listen or manage her emotions.
- Using positive language: Avoid negative statements like, "I don't care what you say," or, "You never do what I ask you to do."
- Focusing on behavior, not on character: Instead of saying, "You are a bad boy because you never put your toys away," say, "It makes a big mess when you don't put your toys away."
- Being specific with instructions: This will reduce the chance for your child's mistakes and your frustration. For example, instead of saying, "Clean up your room," say, "Please pick up your books and put them on the shelf in your bedroom."
- Role-playing: If your child is having difficulty understanding why she is being disciplined, you can role-play to help her see the situation from a different perspective. For example, if your child hits another child, use puppets or other toys to "replay" the situation.



Teach your child that it is okay to disagree and the appropriate way to express her opinions.

Be aware of your own emotions and help your child express her emotions with words instead of hostile actions against you or others.

Communicate to your children with words and actions that you love them.



★ OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE

As parents and child care providers, you can create opportunities to communicate with your children and be involved in their daily lives by:

- Reading with children. Ask questions about the story or how they would handle a specific situation in the story.
- Being involved at school by attending important events such as parent/teacher conferences, artistic performances, and athletic events; volunteering to chaperone for field trips; or helping with school projects.
- Asking open-ended questions about daily activities so your child will respond with more than “yes” or “no.” For example, “What did you and your friends do during recess today?” or “What did you like best about dinner tonight?”
- Having family nights, outings, and trips for the purpose of spending time together.
- Making time to play with children.
- Scheduling weekly or monthly family meetings to share information and discuss important family issues.
- Being involved with school projects or volunteering to chaperone for school events.
- Eating meals together whenever possible, and allowing each family member a chance to talk about their day.

Listen to your child speak without interrupting, judging, or criticizing. Allow your child to express himself or herself completely.



★ COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN

As your infant or toddler begins to form words and phrases, you can develop positive communication with your child by:

- Holding your child close to you when you speak.
- Making eye contact.
- Using a soft, soothing voice.
- Speaking clearly.

★ LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Practicing healthy communication skills with your children will have positive effects on their lives by:

- Encouraging an open relationship, letting them know they can talk to you even when they are scared or angry.
- Cultivating responsible and independent children by teaching them to think about options and the consequences of their actions.
- Building their confidence to express themselves.
- Helping them develop skills to get along well with others.



Although children should be encouraged to communicate their own thoughts and feelings, it is important for parents to protect and speak on behalf of their children when they are harmed. Children will develop confidence to speak for themselves.

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

THE WAY I FEEL

Janan Cain

WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY?

Catherine & Laurence Anholt

LOTS OF FEELINGS

Shelley Rotner

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

BECOMING THE PARENT YOU WANT TO BE

Laura Davis & Janis Keyser

HOW TO TALK SO KIDS WILL LISTEN AND LISTEN SO KIDS WILL TALK

Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish