

Communication Skills Building: A Tip Sheet for Parents

Communicating, Listening, & Asking the Right Questions

- **Listen.** Listen to the difficulties she is facing and how these make her feel. This is a difficult period, especially with respect to peer pressure, and your daughter will need a great deal of support in resisting the urge to be like everyone else.
- **Ask the right questions.** Don't jump to conclusions. Ask open-ended questions instead of "yes/no" questions.
- **Dialogue with her.** Talk with your daughter about a certain situation. Ask her what she thinks about that situation. After listening to her point of view, discuss the potential risks and consequences she could face for decisions and actions made.

Self-Image & Boys

- **Spend one-on-one time with your daughter.** Girls mature at different ages and as they start to experience body changes, many questions arise. It is important that you talk with your daughter about what to expect and how these changes happen at different ages for each girl.
- **Be her guide.** Interest and feelings for boys also begin at different ages, but it's usually around the preteen years. Talk with your daughter about how boys and girls think differently, especially when there is a difference in age.

Time Management/Organizational Skills

- **Monitor your daughter's time.** Teach her time management. Help her be realistic about what she can accomplish and how much time she needs to accomplish different chores and tasks.
- **Set an example.** Our kids watch us closely. They often mimic what we do. Be open with your daughter when you are trying to correct a bad habit. Don't worry about breaking the mystique of being a perfect parent. If every member of the family learns to better manage his or her time and be more organized, everyone will feel less stressed, and family conflicts will be avoided.
- **Set schedules.** Planning specific times to watch TV, go to bed, and turn off lights can help improve time management skills for all family members.

Discipline, Dating, & Generational Issues

- **Set clear expectations.** Be clear when setting house rules, and have your daughter participate in setting those rules. Try to find some agreement between both points of view.
- **Explain cultural differences.** As a parent, talk with your daughter about how you both feel about cultural differences. Rules regarding these differences should reflect a balance between the old and new cultures and traditions.

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- **Both parents should agree.** Our parenting styles are often informed by how we were raised; either we adopt those models or reject them. If you and your partner have differing styles, you must communicate how you are going to parent your child consistently through those differences.

Appropriate Dress & Internet Dangers

- **Discuss what's appropriate. Don't just say NO.** Preteens begin to develop their unique personalities and clothing plays a big role in this phase. Fashion and trends can become a daily struggle. You might feel certain clothes are inappropriate, and she sees some of her friends wearing them. Doing so can encourage her to dress inappropriately behind your back. It is important to explain why she cannot wear certain things and explore where you can find a compromise. Together check out a few fashion magazines for ideas.
- **Set rules and schedules.** The Internet allows easy access to information but can present potential dangers such as identity theft and exposure to inappropriate material. Manage your daughter's online activities, and monitor the use of other electronic devices such as cell phones. Discuss texting privileges; get to know key acronyms of teen messages, such as LOL, BRB, etc.

Positive Reinforcement

- **Provide praise.** Let your daughter know when she is doing a good job. Chances are that she will do more of the same to continue to garner your praise. This not only helps to boost her self-image but encourages her to stay on the right track.
- **Provide support.** Our kids don't always get it right on the first try. Support your daughter where you can and provide tools that might help her do better the next time.

Be Good to Yourself

- **Breathe.** It is important that you keep a cool head, resist using physical punishment, and make your decisions with as much clarity as possible.
- **Seek out parent support groups.** It can be useful to seek out support groups and other parents who can act as a "sounding board" or who may be facing similar situations. Learning from other parents' experiences can be extremely helpful and supportive. Call the Office on Women's Health Helpline at 800-994-9662.

For more information, visit:
www.womenshealth.gov
www.girlshealth.gov