

Building Communication in Your Family

Young children:

- **Make time.** Find 15 minutes to stop and give full attention to your child. Sit down, turn off the TV, and look at your child while you talk about the day. Read a story aloud together.
- **Show empathy.** If your child is upset, hug them to show you understand their feelings. Don't tell them what to think or feel. Let them express their feelings.
- **Be a role model.** Set a good example with your words and tone of voice.
- **Talk about your feelings.** It will help your child learn to do the same. You could say, "It makes me feel sad when you do not listen while I am talking."
- **Respect their feelings.** Don't say, "It's silly to feel that way," or "You'll understand when you get older." Their feelings are real and should be respected.

Teenage children:

- **Share "ordinary time."** Turn common tasks into time to talk with your teen. Use the time you spend driving or walking the dog to talk about what's on their mind.
- **Listen up.** Just listen without judging or criticizing. Resist the urge to give advice or try to solve your teen's problems. When you listen you'll make it clear you care about their ideas, feelings, and experiences.
- **Get involved, be involved, and stay involved.** Go to games or practices when you can. Ask about your teen's homework and school projects.

Source: 2012 Resource Guide.
Preventing Child Maltreatment and
Promoting Well-Being: A Network for Action.
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

