

Successful Two-Way Communications with your Child

One of the most frustrating challenges we face as parents is communicating effectively with our child. Though we strive to open an honest two-way line of communication with our child, we become frustrated when it appears their attention isn't solely on us or the conversation at hand. Yet we seem to find it's perfectly acceptable to discuss things with them while reading the paper, folding clothes, or working on the computer and then are often left wondering when the lines of communication broke.

Children are by nature easily distracted and not always responsive to their environment. It is the responsibility of the parent to emphasize positive patterns of communication and ensure the child learns that ignoring communication is not acceptable. Early prevention, in the form of educating your child about the proper forms of communication, is the key to ensuring that the non-verbal agreement does not take hold. Teach your child by example. Remain completely and totally focused on them and the conversation at hand. Turn off the television; allow calls to go to the voicemail, or go in a room where there are no distractions.

Talk to your child, and explain to them in age-appropriate terms how they are communicating and why their method doesn't work. Show your child how to communicate effectively, even when the questions are hard.

Make yourself an active listener. Let them voice their opinion or side of the story and ask questions to ensure you understand their viewpoint.

Be constant in the manner in which you communicate with you child. Send the same message with each and every interaction. Allow your child to see that you will call their attention to those times that the unwanted behavior rears its ugly head.

Kids will be kids and they will sometimes be distractive and non-communicative. You are the expert in knowing your child's behavior and can best judge the improvement in their communications. The best way to ensure healthy communication patterns is to model positive communication skills.