



Building Bonds That Last: Talking with Your Children in Meaningful Ways



Every child wants to feel seen, heard, and understood by the adults who care for them. Communication is more than words—it's the tone we use, the attention we give, and the empathy we show. When children feel safe expressing their thoughts and emotions, they are more likely to open up, trust, and grow. As parents and caregivers, the way we communicate can either build bridges or create distance—making it one of the most important skills we can develop.

Active Listening

At its core, effective communication begins with listening. Active listening means giving your child your full attention—putting down distractions, making eye contact, and being fully present in the moment. When children feel genuinely heard, they are more likely to open up and share their thoughts and feelings. Simple responses like, "It sounds like that really upset you," or "Tell me more about what happened," can go a long way in helping children feel understood.

The way we speak to children is just as important as how we listen. Using clear, simple, and age-appropriate language helps children better understand expectations and guidance. Long lectures or harsh tones can often lead to frustration or shutdown. Instead, calm and respectful communication models the behavior we want to see. Children are always watching—and learning from—how adults respond in moments of stress.

What We Say

Validate Emotions

Another key element is validating your child's emotions. This doesn't mean you have to agree with everything they say or do, but it does mean acknowledging their feelings without judgment. When a child hears, "I can see why you feel that way," they learn that their emotions matter. This builds emotional awareness and helps children develop healthy ways to express themselves.

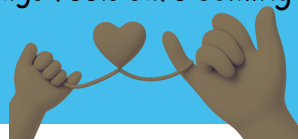
Moments of Connection

Creating consistent moments of connection each day can make a significant difference. Even setting aside five to ten minutes for a daily check-in allows children to share their experiences, joys, and challenges. Asking open-ended questions like, "What was the best part of your day?" or "Was anything difficult today?" encourages meaningful conversation and helps strengthen your bond over time.

Communication Barriers

It's also important to recognize common communication barriers. Yelling, interrupting, dismissing feelings, or overreacting can cause children to shut down or become reluctant to share. While no parent or caregiver is perfect, being mindful of these habits and making small adjustments can greatly improve the quality of your interactions.

Building better communication with your child doesn't happen overnight—it's a daily practice rooted in patience, presence, and care. Every small effort to listen, understand, and connect makes a lasting impact. As parents and caregivers, you don't have to be perfect; you just have to be present. Remember, the goal isn't just to be heard—it's to build a relationship where your child always feels safe coming to you.



If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please contact Cyndie Gilliam LMFT TANF Therapist

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