

INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN AND TEENS

ParentingMontana.org has tools to address common parenting issues. The tools strengthen communication between you and your child and build the skills they need to be confident, respectful, and make healthy choices.

Visit ParentingMontana.org to learn more about tools that address issues like chores, stress, peer pressure, homework, and family rules and expectations for children at every age.

Here is a quick reminder about ways to develop good communication with your child.

Create the Conditions

- Describe the purpose for the conversation.
 - *"I'd like to hear more about how things went on the playground today."*
 - *"I'd like to talk about your plans for this weekend with you."*
 - *"I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about when you are starting your homework each night."*
- Make sure there is enough time available. Find a mutually agreeable time. Don't start a serious conversation when you or your child are upset.
 - *"What would be the best time for us to talk?"*
 - *"Do you have a few minutes to talk after dinner?"*
- Be mindful of your state of mind and your child's state of mind.
 - *"Let's take a break from this topic and talk more later tonight."*
- Start by connecting.
 - *"Tell me how you are feeling about this."*



Listen Actively

- Pay attention without distraction.
 - *"Let me turn off the TV and silence my phone."*
- Be aware of body language.
- Use open-ended questions to invite your child to tell their story in their own words without leading them in a specific direction. Listen for more than facts.
 - *"How does this make you feel?"*
 - *"Can you describe what happened at school before math today?"*
 - *"Can you help me think through how you can join the school club and have time to finish homework and chores?"*
 - *"How can we work together to solve the struggle we seem to be having about cell phone use?"*
- Reflect and rephrase.
 - *"So, you feel angry?"*
 - *"It sounds like you are wanting more time so you don't feel rushed?"*
 - *"You're saying that..." or "Almost as if..."*
 - *"It's like..." or "It feels like..."*

Use "I" Messages

- I feel (describe your feeling) when you (state their behavior). I can't stop thinking (describe the impact).
 - *"I feel frustrated when you are late to the dinner table. It feels like you are disrespecting me."*
 - *"I feel happy when you do your chores without being reminded. It reminds me how mature you are."*

Apologize

- Be genuine.
- Start with *"I'm sorry"* or *"I apologize,"* and be specific about what you are apologizing for.
- Do not say *"I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings."*
- Do say *"I'm sorry that I hurt your feelings."*
- Don't make excuses or apologize in a way that blames the other person.
- Keep it short, and stop talking to let the other person respond.

**Learn about all this and more by visiting
ParentingMontana.org**



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