

# EFFECTIVE WAYS OF COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN



**P**arents and children build and strengthen relationships in the presence of responsive communication. Effective communication involves speaking and listening in ways that make children feel important and valued. It helps your child grow and develop skills along with feeling safe and secure.

Peggy O'Mara once said, "The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice". This quote must resonate with many as our perceptions and behaviour have been shaped by our learning from interactions and conversations with our parents since our childhood. Similarly, as a parent, are you helping your child build a constructive inner voice and positive self-image by conversing with them at a deeper level? The question may seem daunting, but all your children need is for you to understand them better by taking the time and effort to really care.

**Here are some tips to help you skilfully tune-in during conversations with your children.**

**1. Make Eye Contact:**

Maintaining eye contact with the person we are speaking to encourages open and transparent communication. The same applies to parents and children. As a parent, make sure to maintain eye contact every time you talk to your child or when your child is talking to you. You can get on your knees or sit down so that your eyes are at the same level as theirs. This simple act indicates that you are active and attentive in the conversation. The child feels assured knowing that they have your full attention and feel more confident with sharing their thoughts.

**2. Acknowledge Your Child's Feelings:**

Children feel accepted and secure when you empathize with them and understand their perspectives. When you acknowledge your child's feelings, you let them know that their feelings are real and valid. They learn to be more sensitive and accepting towards other people's feelings and emotions too.

**3. Rationalize the Correction:**

Parents usually ask children to not behave in a certain manner to instil correct behaviour, but some may tend to forget to rationalize this correction. You should provide a calm explanation to your children. You will be able to help your child understand the implications of their behaviour of others by giving a composed explanation.

**4. Use More 'Dos' Than 'Don'ts':**

Very often, parents lead with a 'don't' statement when giving instructions to their children. Although the statement conveys the message correctly of not doing a certain thing, the major disadvantage of 'don't' statements is that you fail to promote the positive behaviour you wish to see. Therefore, you should swap your 'don'ts' for 'dos' and use more respectful 'do' statements.

**5. Use Kind Words:**

Needless to say, using kind words helps us convey our message effectively to the listener. As a parent, using kind words creates a respectful relationship and builds better communication with your child. If and when parents use harsh and unkind words, it leaves the children feeling disliked. As a result, parents and children are unable to have a healthy relationship. On the other hand, kids who are spoken to with appreciation and respect, often have better self-worth and confidence, allowing them to thrive.

**6. Be an Emotional Coach:**

An emotional bond between parents and their children is essential for establishing and maintaining mutual respect. This is possible when there is equal emphasis on speaking and listening abilities. Children can learn and understand the different emotional fluctuations in life, with the help of effective emotional coaching.

Spending time with children and communicating with them helps in building a positive parent perception and increases trust.