

PARENTS, LISTEN UP!

COMMUNICATING WITH KIDS

Many parents today are stressed out. Their Number One complaint: too little time! Finding the time to have quality conversations with your children can be very hard, as they are often distracted themselves with school, friends, and wall-to-wall entertainment options. Here are some tips for parents:

RELAX!



BE 100% THERE FOR YOUR CHILDREN. THEY CAN EASILY TELL BY YOUR BODY LANGUAGE AND TONE IF YOU ARE DISTRACTED.

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE MORE THAN A YES OR NO ANSWER. SO, INSTEAD OF "DID YOU HAVE GYM TODAY?" TRY "WHAT DID YOU DO IN GYM TODAY?"

BE RESPECTFUL AND SENSITIVE TO THE CHILD'S UNIQUE PERSONALITY. REMEMBER SOME CHILDREN, CHARACTERISTICALLY BOYS, MAY TAKE LONGER TO OPEN UP. YOU CAN ALWAYS KICK START A DEEPER CONVERSATION WITH DISCUSSION OF A MOVIE OR VIDEO GAME.

DON'T FEEL YOU HAVE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS ALL THE TIME. SOMETIMES "THANK YOU FOR TELLING ME HOW YOU FEEL" IS ALL THE CHILD NEEDS TO HEAR.

TAKE THE TIME TO WAIT FOR A RESPONSE. CHILDREN NEED TIME TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY WANT TO SAY, ESPECIALLY SHY CHILDREN.

SCHEDULE 15 MINUTES EACH NIGHT FOR A ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATION, OR SEIZE THE MOMENT, WHATEVER WORKS BEST. HOLD DISCUSSIONS WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL, AND NOT ONLY WHEN THERE ARE PROBLEMS.

Adapted from *Talking the Talk*. Today's Parent Magazine, November 2001.
Reprinted with permission of the author: Dorothy Nixon

