

## Communication Tips for Parents and Kids

"You never listen to me" is a complaint heard as often from children as parents. Good communication helps children and parents to develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others. Try these tips:

- Teach children to listen... gently touch a child before you talk... say their name.
- Speak in a quiet voice... whisper sometimes so children have to listen... they like this.
- Look a child in the eyes so you can tell when they understand... bend or sit down... become the child's size.
- Practice listening and talking: talk with your family about what you see on TV, hear on the radio or see at the park or store. (Talk with your children about school and their friends.)
- Respect children and use a courteous tone of voice. If we talk to our children as we would our friends, our youngsters may be more likely to seek us out as confidants.
- Catch children and teens being good. Praise them for cooperating with you or their siblings, or for doing those little things that are so easy to take for granted.
- Use door openers that invite children to say more about an incident or their feelings. "I see," "Oh," "tell me more," "No kidding," "Really," "Mmmhmmmm," "Say that again, I want to be sure I understand you."
- Praise builds a child's confidence and reinforces communication. Unkind words tear children down and teach them that they just aren't good enough.
- Children are never too old to be told they are loved. Saying "I love you" is important. Writing it in a note provides the child with a reminder that he can hold on to.
- Give your undivided attention when your children want to talk to you. Don't read, watch TV, fall asleep or make yourself busy with other tasks.