

INFORMATION AND ACTIVITY SHEET

Communicating with your children

A good way to instill the value of respect

Positive communication between you and your children is the key to a harmonious relationship. Everything you say and do can reinforce your relationship with your children and provide them an opportunity to learn how to maintain their own respectful relationships with peers and authority figures.

Simply put. . .

As a parent, it is essential to be aware of your own role in modelling what a respectful adult looks like. How do you communicate with your children and with the people around you? Do you think that you could improve some aspects of the way you communicate?

To ensure your communication with your children is respectful and civil, here are some key tips:

During childhood

Each interaction with your children is a form of communication. The words and tone you use, your facial expression and the gestures that show you care send a message.

Tips to help your children develop positive communication skills:

- Help your children develop an accurate vocabulary for describing their emotions and their needs.
- Listen to them without interrupting and validate their feelings.
- Ask them questions to encourage conversation.
- Create physical closeness by putting yourself at your children's eye-level to make conversations easier.

I'm really listening

- I listen carefully.
- I make eye contact with the other person.
- I nod.
- I make an effort to understand what they're saying.
- I try to understand their feelings.
- I ask questions.

(Institut Pacifique, 2020, 22) [*Translation*]

In adolescence

Your attitude and vocabulary influence those of your teenagers and their perception of your openness, your judgments and your assumptions about others.

Tips for maintaining good communication with your teenagers:

- Choose a good time to talk to them.
- Be sure you take the time to listen to what your teenagers are saying before you start speaking and giving your opinion.
- Try to put yourself in their shoes.
- Show interest in your teenagers by regularly discussing their daily life.
- Ask for their opinion and involve them in the decisions you make as a family.

What are sympathy and empathy

“The terms *sympathy* and *empathy* sometimes lead to confusion, as they both express the idea of a connection with another person’s feelings or behaviours. Sympathy describes shared feelings and the creation of emotional ties, while empathy is the ability to understand exactly what another person is feeling, while maintaining an emotional distance from that person.”

(OQLF) [Adaptation and translation]

Keep in mind

- **Your communication** takes multiple forms (words, actions, attitudes).
- As a parent, **you are a role model**. Children learn through imitation and often copy the ways in which you communicate.
- **Your ability to listen** is crucial to respectful communication.
- The **empathy** that you show is a key component of communication.

Suggested activities

Communicating also involves learning to regulate and express your emotions. Here are some activities to carry out with your children to contribute to their development.

- Use sports or cultural activities to help your children understand their own feelings and those of others.
- Listen to music with your children and have them describe their emotional state (physical sensations, thoughts and feelings).
- Create a list of feelings and transform them into works of art.
- Explain how the brain works in adolescence.
- Suggest activities like drawing, playing sports, writing or listening to music to reduce emotional pressure.
- Use a “feelings thermometer” or another visual tool to describe the intensity of some emotions (positive or negative) and how to calm down.
- Create a personal set of steps for calming down and share your communication strategies with your peers.
- Come up with activities to learn more about everyone’s interests and best qualities.

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