

Developing good communication with your child: tips

When you work on developing good communication with your child, it helps your child to develop skills for communicating with you and other people. It also builds your relationship, because it sends the message that you value your child's thoughts and feelings.

Here are some ideas:

- **Set aside time for talking and listening to each other.** Family meals can be a great time to do this.
- Turn off phones, computers and televisions when you and your child are communicating. This shows that you're completely focused on the interaction or conversation.
- Talk about everyday things as you go through your day. If you and your child are used to communicating a lot, it can make it easier to talk when big or tricky issues come up.
- Be open to talking about all kinds of feelings, including anger, joy, frustration, fear and anxiety. This helps your child develop a 'feelings vocabulary'. But it's best to wait until you've calmed down from strong emotions like anger before you talk about them.
- Tune in to what your child's body language is telling you, and try to respond to non-verbal messages too. For example, 'You're very quiet this afternoon. Did something happen at school?'
- Involve your child in conversations – this could be as simple as asking, 'What do you think about that, Gabriel?'

Be willing to stop what you're doing and listen to your child. Often you can't predict when your child will start talking about something important to them.