

HOW TO HELP KIDS COMMUNICATE

Things to Do:

- Become more aware of your listening style. Look at the situations where you fall into ineffective listening (e.g., when you're busy, disturbed by financial or job concerns), and consider ways to listen more effectively.
- Ask others (spouse, kids, co-workers, close friends) for feedback on how well you listen. Check again after working on it for a few weeks, and see if you've improved.
- Gently give your kids feedback on their listening habits. Ask them to give you feedback on your listening habits, too. Work with each other to establish good active and facilitative listening skills.
- Talk with your kids about relationships and the role of communication. Games such as "Telephone" (the simple game of passing a message from one person to the next and comparing the message once it has been heard and repeated by four or five people) and other games demonstrate the importance of good listening habits.
- When you don't have time to listen right now, make sure to get back to your kids within a reasonable time. It's important to acknowledge their problems and to commit yourself to helping.

Things to Avoid:

- Don't expect yourself to be a perfect listener all the time.
- Don't expect your kids to be perfect listeners. Like you, they need time to develop their listening skills. Kids by nature are pretty wrapped up in themselves.