

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

1. **Engage in conversation with nonthreatening questions.** Try to listen nonjudgmentally and listen more than you speak. Be curious about your children.
   1. What are they passionate about? What motivates/inspires them?
   2. What are their hopes for the future?
   3. Is there a pattern in their struggles?
2. **Ask open-ended questions that require more than a yes/no answer.** This type of question helps children think through ideas and options. Instead of asking “How was school today?” try:
   1. “What made you laugh today?”
   2. “What was difficult for you today?”
   3. “What was the best part of your day?”
   4. “How did you help someone today?”
3. **Try to match your child’s emotional state (unless it is hostile).** Let your responses try to reflect his/her mood. Reflecting helps a person feel understood.
   1. Instead of “Why did you say that?” try:
      1. “It seems like you are really trying to get your point across.”
      2. “It seems like you might be mad at your friend.”
   2. Instead of “Why are you acting this way?” try:
      1. “You are frustrated with your grade.”
      2. “You’re disappointed with the tryout results.”
4. **Casually model rational decision-making strategies.** Briefly discuss how you were once confronted with a similar situation, and how you arrived at a decision. Most importantly, put choices/decisions on your child.
   1. Instead of saying “This is what you need to do,” try:
      1. “What are your thoughts about fixing this problem?”
      2. “What are you going to do about this situation?”
   2. Instead of saying, “I’m going to take care of this.” try asking your child:
      1. “How can I support you?” (without solving/intervening)
      2. “What do you need from me as you take care of this situation?”

Adapted from <https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/talking-teens> (April 2017)