Let’s talk

Amidst the fast pace of modern life, it can be hard to get the entire family focused on talking to each other. Cell phones, tablets, laptops and busy schedules can add distractions within the family. But when you’re a parent, you can take charge with a basic set of steps that will support an open and honest discussion between all the members in your family.

Consider these tips:

*Take time to talk*—the days of family dinners may seem like a distant memory. Busy schedules with activities occurring during the late afternoon or evening might make it difficult to have a daily family dinner. Try having dinner together twice a week or try to find a good time to talk with all of the members of your family. Talking before bed might be a great time with few distractions.

*Express your feelings*—Family members need to hear about the thoughts, feelings, and expectations of each other.

*Accept the differences*—Learning to identify, accept and understand feelings can be difficult. Each person in the family is unique. Their characteristics have been influenced by a combination of inherited traits and personal experiences.

*Be sensitive to emotions*—Everyone experiences a range of emotions and everyone can have a different way of expressing feelings.

Here are a few ways that you can communicate with your family and children effectively:

- Stay focused on the other person speaking.
- Be an active listener and ask questions to keep the conversation moving.
- Match the speaker’s emotional state, unless it is hostile.
- Withhold advice unless you are asked to give it.
- Put yourself in the other person’s shoes.
- Think before you speak or respond to someone.
- Encourage the other person through a positive response.
- Be pleasant and keep the conversation positive by talking about how you might want to solve the problem.

Need a refresher when it comes to communicating with your family? If so, keep in mind that your ParTNers EAP offers confidential no-cost counseling and resources. You can call 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486).

Plus, the www.HERE4TN.com website offers information, self-help tools and resources you can access 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

www.Here4TN.com | 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)
Communication and your children

Children watch and listen to you and pick up your communication style. They hear the tone of your voice and they interpret body language better than many adults do. Learning to communicate effectively with your children will help build your relationship with them.

**Infants**—Many begin communicating with their infants before they are born. Some parents speak to their unborn child and may play music for the baby. Once born, speak softly and hold them gently, letting them know they are safe.

**Toddler**—As children grow, you will continue to do many of the same things you did when they were infants. You continue to provide names for things that they see or do and you begin to help them label their emotions. Ask your toddler’s questions and listen to their answers without interrupting.

**Preschool**—Your child has a lot to say now! Be sure to continue to listen and be responsive to children’s questions. Resist the temptation to answer before they have finished their thought. Try not to interrupt during a long story. Respect your children’s feelings when expressed and do not dismiss them as invalid or unimportant. It is important to continue to help them learn how to label his feelings.

**School age**—Your school age children begin to have real life experiences of their own. Their friends are becoming important to them and this is a good topic of conversation to have with your children. Talk about what your children like and don’t like. Ask questions and listen carefully to their answers.

**Teens**—Communicating with teens is extremely important. They might become less open to communicating with you. It is important that you recognize signs of stress, depression and anxiety. During the teen years a variety of different emotional doors open. Self-esteem issues, bullying, depression and suicide are all a real part of many teens’ lives. Try to ask a few questions about school and friends to get a conversation started. Be sure to listen carefully as they express themselves to you. It is important to be sensitive to your teen’s feelings. Keep in mind that depending on your reaction to what your teen tells you may determine if they decide to speak to you about things in the future.

www.Here4TN.com | 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)