



Communicate to Connect

As a therapist the most frequent parent complaints I hear involve communication. Parents often ask how to encourage their children to talk to them with respect. Sometimes it's just how to persuade their child to talk to them at all. The most basic answer to this is to do for them what you are asking of them. If you speak to your child with respect and show that you value their opinions it strengthens the relationship. When we have a strong relationship with someone we are more inclined to talk to them about things on our mind. If we are treated with respect, we are more inclined to treat others with respect.

Communication is at its core a way to connect. This is why it's hard to become close with someone who does not speak the same language. If you want to connect with your child, find ways to listen more. It is important to refrain from commenting, especially in a negative way. If you listen quietly your child is much more likely to open up.

Listed below are 5 ways to ensure open lines of communication with your child:

1. Listen and validate what your children say. Even from a very young age children know who values what they say and who discounts it.
2. Give your children the same respect that you are expecting.
3. Make expectations crystal clear in a nonthreatening way.
4. Always be honest in an age appropriate and kind way.
5. Listen more than you talk, especially with teens.

If you establish these guidelines in your relationship with your children it will be much easier to communicate in a meaningful way. Over time you will find that your relationship has improved and that the communication has increased.

Jennifer can be reached at 407-536-8877 or Jennifer@jmcounseling.com