

# Talk to them



We don't get instruction booklets about babies and children – we are just supposed to know what to do. But it is very hard sometimes.

Love is not enough. We have to take time to learn how to take care of our children properly.

Children are developing and learning every day, and they are small and can get hurt easily. How can we help them?

Talking to them helps a lot – and it does not cost anything.

Page 1

## What should I say?

Explain how and why things work: why do you mash potatoes or soak beans?

Tell them they are beautiful.

Tell them that you love them – everyone feels better when they know someone loves them.

Listen to them - their questions tell you their worries.

Tell them about yourself – where you were born, what the world was like when you were a child, where you went to school, what work you have done.

Tell them about their extended family, show pictures if you have them. This gives them a feeling of belonging.

Tell them about your religion and culture and why things are done this way or that way.

Talking to our children makes them strong and passes skills on to the next generation.



Page 2

## How should I say it?

With patience and love.

Children often ask adults "Why?", because they want to learn about things. We should be proud that they want to know and understand about the world.

We should try to answer as many of their questions as we can.

Sometimes when you are busy, it is hard to take the time to explain things to a child – but parents who explain things help their children understand the world better.

Remember that your child doesn't mean to irritate you – children do not always realize that you have to think of many things every day.

## Communicate with care

Say clearly what you expect from your child, e.g. "I need you to help me solve a problem, please."



Page 3

Describe the problem: "We eat late because I can only start cooking after work. That makes us get to bed very late."

Help your child work out a solution: "Do you think you can help?"



Make suggestions and offer choices: "If you help peel vegetables or set the table before I get home, that would help a lot."

Explain what the consequence of each choice could be: "If you peel the vegetables, I can get the fire going, and we can eat sooner."

Negotiate. Try solving the problem so that everyone is happy: "Lighting the fire is dangerous. But you can build one after peeling potatoes. I will let you light it when I get home."

Children who participate in decisions understand where they come from, and what they will lead to – so they are more willing to carry out the decisions.

Page 4

## Remember to praise them

Children thrive on praise – especially those children who always seem to be looking for attention.

We often tell our children negative things like "You make me so angry!" or "Your hair really needs a wash!"

We would feel hurt and angry if a friend said the same things to us. Children feel the same!

We feel better when people notice and talk about the things that we do right – children feel the same.

A comment like "You were so patient with your baby sister when you were playing today" will help them play even nicer next time.

Try to find at least one good thing to say to your child every day.

## Talk about the difficult stuff

Most parents do not like having to talk to their children about sex, HIV and birth control.

They think:

- "If I tell them about sex, they will become sexually active,"; or



Page 5

- "They learn about sex in school these days. They know more than I do. They will think that I am stupid,"; or
- "It is the school's job to tell them these things."

Information about sexuality is one of the most important thing parents or caregivers will ever tell their children – but we all find it hard.

Teachers do not like it either.

Some schools skip lessons about sex. Do not depend on the school to do this right.

We need not be so scared. Children see sex information as just another set of facts. If they know more than you do, learn from them! Go to the library and let your child read to you: learn together!

Sex is an important part of life. Talking about it often and openly prepares your child to deal with it in a healthy way.



- Need help?  
Call Childline toll free at **0800 055 555**.
- If you want to know more about positive parenting visit **www.childlinesa.org.za**

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Page 6