

TIPS FOR SCOUTERS

How to Communicate with Kids

- from How to protect your children from child abuse: a parent's guide booklet
- Communicating with kids isn't easy. Good communication with children will establish trust and help to reduce stress in your relationship. It's hard, but not impossible, especially if you keep these tips in mind:

Establish rapport - Rapport comes from friendly, honest, face-to-face adult/kid relations. Welcome their suggestions.

Laugh at their jokes - Downplay the lectures.

Teach decision making - Allow your children to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Confidence in making simple decisions in their lives will help to prepare them for the more difficult choices they will face on their own. Foster a sense of responsibility for decisions and an understanding of consequences. Encourage your child to explain the reasons for their choices to develop their understanding of values. Offering choices between two desired actions can also reduce the number of commands you give.

Use peer pressure - the influence of kids on other kids – to help get your message across.

Guide the majority - or the influential minority - toward the right attitudes and actions. And they will begin working on other children.

Explain consequences - explain how ignoring rules affects you. Example: "When you stay out past curfew, I worry about your safety."

Listen for the hidden needs and feelings - Ask clarifying questions without being confrontational to discover why children changed patterns or are avoiding people or places.

Teach openness - Explain the difference between good secrets such as a surprise party and secrets that make you feel bad.

Be the adult - Children expect decisions to be fair, just and consistent. Create reasonable limits. Admit your own mistakes. Nobody is perfect.

Walk the talk - Be careful not to expect more from your children than they can expect from you.

Help children solve their own problems - use questions to help your children identify issues and appropriate alternatives.

Share your strategies - Children often experience similar challenges to their parents. Share how you have overcome challenges like dealing with frustration, failure, fear, stress, loss, and even success.

Think long term - in the heat of an issue or situation consider the long term impact on the relationship.

Smile, even if you don't feel like it- Your body language speaks louder than your words and how you say them. Smiling can also help you to gain perspective.

Catch your children doing something right - Too often children only hear about what they have done wrong. Recognize even small efforts to improve and you'll provide the encouragement to try harder.

Provide sufficient direction - Do your children know exactly what you mean. Failure to follow through may mean your children don't understand your directions. But too much direction on simple tasks is demeaning. Find the balance for the situation. Check for understanding when children seem confused or lack follow through.

When working with youth:

don't play favourites - show a similar level of caring to all of the children in your care.

touch children in safe places. The back of the head and the shoulders are acceptable. Aggressive wrestling and tickling can put you at risk of inappropriate contact. Allow children to back away from your well intentioned affection.

take care in providing first aid - involve a member of the same gender as any child requiring attention, if possible. Otherwise, have another person present. Don't force children to remove clothing for an examination.

stay in view of others - if you need to speak to a child alone, remove yourselves the necessary distance and remain in the view of others.

respect privacy - give children privacy when changing, taking showers, using the washroom, and sleeping.

avoid sexual talk - do not tell sexual jokes or behave with children in a way that promotes promiscuity or the acceptance of sexually explicit material.

supervise responsibly - do not permit abusive youth peer activities (initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, and bullying).

know the special needs of the children - ask parents on a regular basis to inform you of any medical needs or conditions (such as medication for hyperactivity).

provide adequate supervision - maintain appropriate adult to youth ratios for the activities and the age group. Ensure that those responsible for supervision have the skills for their role.

use appropriate approaches to discipline - be fair, consistent and reasonable in consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Take steps to prevent situations from arising through proper planning, adequate supervision and clear communication of expectations. Stop inappropriate behaviour early.

be alert to children at risk. You have a duty to report suspected abuse.