

Clear Communication with your Children

Children develop a sense of their own self-worth and of how you feel about them from how you communicate with them. We are communicating all the time. Sometimes we are not aware of the impact that we are having when communicating.

Have you ever wondered why children respond in unexpected ways to the words you say? It may be because the words they hear differ from the emotion you show. Because they hear a mixed message, their response is also mixed. They are mirroring the speaker's incongruent verbal and non-verbal communication. Here are three ways to begin communicating more clearly:

1. Know what you want to say before you say it. With children it is best to bottom line rather than give all of the reasons and background information. Give them small bits of information and ask clarifying questions. Let them be a part of the conversation.
2. Be willing to listen and be an active listener. To be an active listener, put aside what you are doing, focus your eyes on your speaker, think about what the speaker is really saying, show interest with facial and body gestures, and ask curious questions. Remember to listen with your heart and your ears.
3. Be aware of your own inner parent messages. How many times growing up did you say that you would never say or do something your mom was famous for? Then you grow up, have children and catch yourself saying or doing just that!

Another important point to remember when communicating with young children is that they are very literal. When you say, "If you say mom one more..." The child will think, "If I don't call you mom, then what would you like me to call you?"

What you are trying to say is that after 25 "moms" you feel you have met their every need and you need some quiet time. So clearly articulate your need for some "mommy" time.

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