

Five Strategies to maintain a positive relationship with your child

Building a strong, close relationship with your child is important now, and as he or she grows. Teens in Arlington tell us that fewer than *1 in 3 teens feel that they can talk to their parent or caregiver about difficult topics**.

Our children are never too young, nor too old. *Building the relationship, and the communication, can start at any time.* We offer these strategies to help you in this important work.

Make time for them



- Make time when they're ready to talk
- Share meals & fun time together
- Set aside time just for them – and let them decide how to spend it

Listen - without judgment



- Listen for meaning in what they say (and don't say)
- Hear them before they hear you
- Turn off the voice in your own head
- Ask questions to understand their thinking

Recognize their feelings



- Acknowledge and accept their feelings
- Try to understand what is going on behind the feelings
- Teach them to label their feelings
- Model calm behaviors

Compliment them



- Tell them you love them - often
- Point out and thank them for good behavior - even minor things
- Notice and praise specific *efforts* ("You really worked hard on that project")



Support them with boundaries and expectations!

- Discuss and develop clear, consistent, and reasonable rules, expectations, and consequences
- Know where they are going and with whom
- Encourage their interests and their passion
- Turn struggles, failures and mistakes into learning opportunities

For more information, visit www.apcyf.org, or contact Michael Swisher at mswish@arlingtonva.us

*2015 Arlington Developmental Asset® Survey of 8th/10th/12th grade students

Give your child the gift of a conversation with the Please Hear Me Out card!

For more information, flip the page over ->

HELP ME FEEL SAFE TO TALK

PLEASE HEAR ME OUT

I have a question or problem that might make you upset. So even though I'm still responsible for my actions, by accepting this CARD you agree to "LUV-Listen" and support me, staying calm and helping me find answers or solutions.

For information and resources on communication at home, visit www.apcyf.org
Based on the Problem Pass, created by Karol Kumpfer, PH.D. and MADD

LUV LISTENING

- L – LISTEN** without judgment, with your ears, eyes and heart to understand my situation. Try to put yourself in my place.
- U – UNDERSTAND:** Repeat back what I say in your own words to show understanding. Ask me respectful questions.
- V – VALIDATE** my feelings by expressing empathy, even if you disagree. Express confidence in my ability to find solutions.

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Using the 'Please Hear Me Out' card

Hang the card on the fridge or other place where it is visible and invite your kids to hand it to you when they need you to listen. And when they do...

- **Breathe.** They are probably stressed, so keep things calm for both of you.
- **Thank them for coming.** This is exactly what you want: for your child to share their concerns and questions!
- **Let them talk.** Listen. Just listen. For every 5-minutes of conversation, you should talk less than 1 minute.
- **Use Reflective Listening.** Repeat back what they just said. It sends a *clear message that you're listening AND gives you a moment to breathe and be mindful of your response.*
- **Ask neutral, open-ended questions.** Open up the conversation!
 - o Can you say more? (easy to ask, non-judgmental)
 - o What do you think (or feel) about that?
 - o I wonder if there is another way to think about that? (this could be a way to move them towards a different way of thinking, without imposing it on them.)
- **Suppress your surprise.** If it is a topic that really makes you uncomfortable, do your best not to show it. Young people will test adult reactions to know if a topic is safe. A calm response tells them it is safe to talk about this. *Once a parent indicates that a topic is taboo, a child will not bring it up again. Ever.*

The card is a reminder to...

...**Parents** (and other adults) to **listen** and be supportive when your child or teen has a question, problem or issue.

...**Teens** to **talk to a trusted and caring adult** when you have concerns or questions about a difficult topic or issue.

Why this? Why now?



One in three (29%) of Arlington teens (8th, 10th & 12th graders)* feel comfortable talking to parents or caregivers about difficult topics (alcohol, dating, sexual activity, drugs etc.).



Parents and caregivers are THE primary sources of information for young people and the most powerful prevention measure.



As teens talk (and listen) to their parents, risky behaviors drop, and Developmental Assets® rise!



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