



## **Top Tips for Healthy Family Communication**

Print out the following and highlight one or two strategies you will work on in the coming weeks. Choose two times each day to read them and recite them out loud.

### **Everyday Communication**

- Listen more than you talk. Active listening is best and includes eye contact, leaning in and nodding.
- Model healthy communication with your spouse and children. Kids learn what they see.
- Use conversation as a way to get to know your children better. Ask questions for understanding, more than information. (How did you decide on that project? What was your favorite or the hardest part?)
- Use open ended questions to encourage deeper conversation. (ie- How did that make you feel? What happened next?)
- Resist the urge to fix a child's problem. They learn resilience by overcoming their own struggles.
- Hold off on suggestions unless directly asked. And even then, think twice. Learning their opinions is also valuable and very hard to ascertain after yours is given.
- Don't take it personally when they seem to disregard your opinions/feelings.
- Paraphrase what you hear. This cuts down on miscommunication and makes the other person feel heard.
- Avoid interrupting. It's a big sign that you weren't really listening.
- Talk early and often about big topics like alcohol, vaping, religion, sex, commitment to education, etc,
- Find teachable moments in daily life to use as a reason to discuss these topics. (teens drinking in a movie, someone vaping at Wawa)
- Make your viewpoint known without lecturing. Drop "nuggets" of info you know to be true and leave them be. (I'm always impressed when I see Mr. Jones working so hard on his lawn. Hard work is so rewarding.)

Studies show that parents are the leading influence in their kids' decision-making. When kids aren't afraid of an ambush (lecture) or interrogation (excessive questioning), they will come to you to discuss important topics. BONUS: They may even ask for your opinion.



### **Tips for when times are tense:**

- Pay attention to your body language. Keep your arms uncrossed and be on eye level whenever possible. 90% of communication is non-verbal.
- Stay on one topic and focus on the here and now to avoid bringing up old issues or past behaviors
- Express your feelings directly and be specific and straightforward to avoid sarcasm, putdowns or name calling. (“I” statements are very helpful.)
- If you mess up and communicate poorly, be honest and apologize and move on. Allow them to do the same.
- Deescalate another person’s anger by using neutral, calm tone.
- Use direct and specific language such as “Please talk to your sister in a respectful manner” and avoid vague statements and use of negative questions such as “Why do you always do that?”
- Make constructive statements such as “Something is bothering me; can we discuss it?”

Want help building stronger bonds with the youth in your life?  
Reach out to learn more at [mobilizer@wcctc.org](mailto:mobilizer@wcctc.org)