

[The Art of Getting Your Kids to Talk to You](#)

Being a parent isn't easy. Some days just getting everyone in your family all together at the same time for dinner can seem like the "impossible dream". Between after school sports and clubs and working and errands and carpools, it's not surprising that almost half of the parents in a recent survey said they feel a growing distance between themselves and their children.

Today's children have more things to deal with than kids did even twenty years ago. Drugs, violence, mixed messages in advertising, peer pressure, packed schedules and outside activities all add to the pressure they face.

So how, in the midst of all this chaos, do you find time to talk to your kids -- and more importantly, have them talk back to you?

Here are several ideas that can help:

1. Eat dinner together as a family at least three times a week. Conversations flow easier when they happen around the dinner table. If your family is conversationally-challenged in the beginning, think of conversation starters before each meal. Plan a family vacation, letting each child talk about where they'd like to go, or what they'd like to do. Talk about current events, the latest movies or upcoming special events. Ask your children open-ended questions that have to be answered with more than yes or no.

2. Turn off the outside world. Set aside "family time" each night and have everyone turn off their phones, the computers and the television. Let your friends and extended family know that you won't be available during that time, and stick to it. Your kids (especially teenagers) may joke about it, but secretly they'll probably be delighted. Use this time to reconnect with each other. Watch a movie, play board games, take turns reading out loud, but whatever you do, do it together.

See how much you can learn about kids, children when you take a little time to read a well-researched article? Don't miss out on the rest of this great information.

3. Cook at least one meal a week together. Even your youngest children can do something to help. If your kitchen is too small for everyone to fit, schedule a "helper" or have your children be responsible for different parts of the meal. Your family will grow closer during this time, and your kids may even start the conversations themselves. (You can always get the ball rolling by talking about things you did with your parents. While you may not be cool, chances are your kids think your parents are, and will be impressed).

4. Make it safe for your kids to talk to you. Let them know that you won't get angry or upset if they talk to you about what's going on. If they tell you something "off the record" then let it stay that way. (Emergencies and dangerous situations aside).

5. Listen to what they have to say. If you're working, or doing something else when your child starts to talk to you, they may give up if they know your attention is really somewhere else. Give your child the same courtesy that you'd give to a friend or acquaintance, by giving them your undivided attention when they're speaking.

6. Use active listening skills. Make sure that you understand what your child is telling you. Repeat what they told you and ask questions.

7. Set aside special time to spend with each child. It may be nothing more than taking one child at a time with you when you run errands, but let each child know that you value spending special time with them.

8. Be patient. Don't expect a "perfect" family. If you're not June Cleaver and your husband isn't Howard Cunningham, it's okay. Just remember that perfect families really don't exist outside of television re-runs.

Just keep trying, and you'll learn the art of conversation with your kids isn't as hard as you thought!

About the Author

Michael Hehn writes articles about various topics.

Find out what he has to say about kids at [Kids](#)

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