

Subject Matter Specialists' take on raising kids:

1. Establish open lines of communication.

Kids want to talk to their parents about sensitive issues. They want to ask questions when parents are open to them. If children feel fearful in asking a question or feel they shall be reprimanded in some way, they will naturally shy away from it. It is our responsibility to create an open atmosphere where our kids feel confident, relaxed and secure in communication with teachers. Kids should be happy with asking us any question, any time on any topic without fear of consequences. Be prepared to revisit your communication chats often.

2. Start early.

When communication is about sensitive issues with kids at a young age you are able to instil your values and set standards. Teens tend to turn to their peers more for communication of key issues unless they have established a close and open relationship with their parents. It is important to take advantage of opportunities to discuss sensitive issues as they arise and teach your kids the facts.

3. Communication with your kids.

Giving your kids some undivided attention during communication improves their self-esteem and lets them know that what they have to say is important to you and you are interested in listening to them. Teaching is a busy job and it is difficult to stop what we're doing sometimes. It can be quite off putting when you're trying to talk to someone who is obviously not listening wholeheartedly. For example if they're on the computer, or marking work. Listen to what they are really asking, as this will help you know how many details they need to know. Before you jump into check what is being asked. Effective Communication with your kids also fosters their self-esteem.

4. Initiate communication with your kids.

While kids will mostly come and ask questions from time to time, some do not. Therefore it is necessary to initiate conversation with your kids about everyday issues. Remember that the vocabulary you use needs to be appropriate for their age level. Use shorter and simpler words for young children and more technical information for older children.

5. Be patient.

Particularly young children take much longer to absorb information and comprehend discussions you have had. Be prepared for them to want to revisit your conversations often and know that this is very normal. Patience and persistence will help the process run smoothly for you both.

6. Take the initiative.

Once you have had a discussion or even a few with your kids, you too can revisit conversations. You may ask them what they have learnt or what they remember about a particular topic. This way you can check their understanding and correct any misconceptions

7. Be informal and relaxed.

Bring up sensitive issues that are topical as they arise for example when kids mentions something that appeared on TV, in the paper, down the street. This shows that you will talk about these subjects with little fuss at any time.

8. Use resources.

If you are a little nervous about talking about some issues with your kids, definitely get some resources to help and guide you. Go to the library or bookstore and ask for books relevant for your kid's age group.

9. Communication requires feelings.

Don't hesitate to talk values and feelings along with the facts. Kids do need facts, but reassurance is just as important.

10. Be honest.

Provide straightforward and truthful answers. Children are very perceptive and if they do not receive an honest answer, they tend to fill in the gaps for themselves, which are often incorrect leaving them confused.