

## Family Communication Tips

**Good communication helps children and parents to develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others.**

***Try these tips:***

- Give your undivided attention when your children want to talk to you. Don't read, watch TV, fall asleep or make yourself busy with other tasks.
- Teach children to listen... gently touch a child before you talk... say their name.
- Speak in a quiet voice... whisper sometimes so children have to listen... they like this.
- Look a child in the eyes so you can tell when they understand... bend or sit down... become the child's size.
- Practice listening and talking: talk with your family about what you see on TV, hear on the radio or see at the park or store.
- Talk with your children about school and their friends.
- Rather than saying "how was school today," which allows an answer of "fine" or "ok" – ask this: *"Tell me about school today" or "What were the best and worst things that happened today."* This will open up a conversation more easily.
- Respect children and use a courteous tone of voice. If we talk to our children as we would our friends, our youngsters may be more likely to seek us out as confidants.
- Catch children and teens being good. Praise them for cooperating with you or their siblings, or for doing those little things that are so easy to take for granted. Even a quick "thank you" or "nice job" goes a long way.
- Use door openers that invite children to say more about an incident or their feelings. Examples are: "I see," "Tell me more," "No kidding," "Really," "Say that again, I want to be sure I understand you."
- Praise is very important. Praise builds confidence and reinforces communication. Unkind or mean words tear children down and teach them that they just aren't good enough.
- Children are never too old to be told they are loved. Saying "I love you" is important. Writing it in a note provides the child with a reminder that he can hold on to.