

PARENTING TIPS

Keep Connections Open

Some of the ways parents relate to their children work against emotional closeness. Be careful not to undermine your own efforts with actions that close your child's heart. Here are a few examples of things to avoid:

1. Using anger as discipline. Angry responses, sarcasm, and mean words may seem justified at the moment, but they do more harm than good. Anger builds walls in family life. Firmness is important with children, but harshness hinders closeness.
2. Focusing on problem solving instead of empathy. When children begin to open up emotionally, they reveal problems so obvious that you may have trouble resisting the urge to fix them. Be careful that, in your desire to solve problems, you don't lose the emotional connectedness that comes through vulnerability.
3. Lecturing is another common pitfall that prevents emotional growth. Just because you have an important truth to communicate doesn't mean your child is ready to learn. Some children shut down and just tolerate a lecture, missing much of the content. Teaching is valuable, but kids need parents to be creative and sensitive for them to learn life lessons.
4. Too much criticism also hinders emotional connectedness. It may seem that the fastest way to change children is to point out when they miss the mark, but efficiency may miss effectiveness. Children often perceive parents as critical, so be careful how you share negative information. Parents who use children's mistakes as examples of what not to do often give the impression that the child can't measure up – which, of course, decreases the child's willingness to open up. As you work with your child, remember that a soft heart is an open heart. We need to look for ways to connect before we can impact the heart.

This parenting tip is from the book, Parenting is Heart Work by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN,
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