

Building Strong Relationships Through Communication

Body Language
is a type of non-verbal communication where actions are used to show feelings.

What we know:

As kids get older it can still be really difficult for them to understand and express their feelings, thoughts, and emotions. It may also be difficult for them to pick up on body language (non-verbal cues) from other people. Our job as a parent is to help them build strong and positive relationships by using good communication skills.

You might think, I can't get them to put away their backpack, how will I get them to listen to a lesson on communication? Don't worry. Communication can be taught by little everyday actions.

From the beginning of life your child has been communicating with you. Communication with your child can be amazing. Do you remember seeing your child's first smile or celebrating your child's first word? Communication can be



challenging, too. It doesn't feel quite as amazing, when a child communicates by having a temper tantrum, rolling his eyes, or slamming a door. Naming emotions and showing your child examples of body language can help them understand how actions may express what someone is feeling or thinking.

Try this:

- **Describe Actions:** You can help your child better understand how actions communicate. You can look at someone who is looking down with his arms crossed and ask your child, "What might he be feeling?" Or when your child communicates with actions you can describe it for them. For example, you can say to your child, "When you roll your eyes at me, you seem annoyed and I feel disrespected."
- **Start the Conversation:** You can teach your child how to start a conversation. Talk to your child during car rides about where you are going and what you see. Talk during commercials about the TV show you are watching. Just as you taught your child new words as a toddler, you can show them how to start a conversation.
- **Build on the Story:** You can help your child learn to listen and build on someone else's story. After your child has told you something, repeat some of it back and then follow up with a related question like, "it sounds like she was really excited about getting the award. How did other people around her act?"

For fun:

The Pixar short film [For The Birds](#) is a fun way to have a talk with your child about how body language and tone are used to communicate with others. Do you both agree on what the birds are saying?