Improve family communication

While every family is unique, all families benefit when parents pay close attention to communication in the home to maintain a loving and supportive environment.

As your family grows and changes, so does the way you talk to and do things with each other. Children face tougher issues as they get older, and your relationship with your partner also changes. It’s important to remember the basics of good family communication. It’ll help you keep up with the needs of your children and partner over time.

• **Be there.** Turn off electronics and give your loved ones your full attention often. Use this time to ask one another questions, learn about each other’s day, help one another solve problems, and encourage each other.

• **Do unto others...** Remember the Golden Rule? When you talk to and do things with your partner and children, treat them with the same level of respect you want given to you.

• **Have dinner as a family often.** Sitting together without distractions and talking about daily life has been linked to many positive behaviors in children.

Studies have found when people help others look at problems in new ways, they improve their own mood and reduce symptoms of depression. In other words, helping others benefits the helper.
Relationship tune-up tips

Your relationship with your partner will be more fulfilling if you make an effort to deepen, nurture and strengthen it.

- Be respectful, even when you disagree. Avoid using harsh language toward your partner.
- Apologize to your partner when you’re wrong about something. Let go of past conflicts and missteps. Focus on the present, and move forward.
- Schedule date nights now and then. It’ll help you reconnect as a couple and enjoy one another’s company outside the normal routine.
- Enjoy new activities together. Whether it’s exercise, the arts, or socializing with new people, sharing a common interest can help refresh your relationship.
- Schedule a romantic weekend getaway for just the two of you.
- Share your feelings about your relationship with your partner so you can make changes that keep both of you happy.

Better communication, better relationships

Engage youngsters
When talking with children and teens, ask open-ended questions that require more than a one-word “yes” or “no” answer. Show active interest in youngsters’ activities, likes, dislikes, peer relationships, and opinions about current events. With teens, keep in mind the many physical, psychological and social changes they’re constantly going through.

Keep it light and positive
Have a sense of humor about the strangeness of life. Being playful with your family can help keep things in perspective and reduce the stress of hard times. Share positive feelings with your family members, like what you admire about them and how important they are to you.

Listen actively
Active listening is the basis for all useful communication. When someone is speaking to you, put aside your own thoughts briefly. Try to understand the other person’s intentions, feelings, needs and wants. While you won’t always be able to resolve the other person’s concerns, your focused listening shows empathy.

Additional Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, Good Therapy, Psychology Today.

Webinar—Join us Wednesday, Nov. 8 for a webinar—Caregiver Coaching: How to Have the ‘Difficult Conversations’ with your Family Members. Register here.