

# LET'S TALK

## Communicating with Your Child At Every Stage

From the first diaper change until they leave your nest, regularly talking and listening to your children is important.



That's often easier said than done, whether they're toddlers whose favorite words are "No" and "Mine," or teens who think you know nothing.

Even when you can't yet understand them, or when they appear not to hear you, the effort you're making to communicate is valuable.

### ***With your baby and toddler:***

- Speak in simple, everyday language rather than "baby talk," so your child learns to properly form words and mimic them.

### ***With your 3 to 4 year old:***

- Mirror back in words how you think a child is feeling. Play a game called "Feeling Faces," during which you make a face that describes a feeling and ask your child to guess. Then take turns.

### ***With your 5 to 8 year old:***

- Ask directed questions like, "What was the best part of your day?" Discuss your child's friends, favorite school subjects and other interests, such as sports.

### ***With your 9 to 12 year old:***

- Your child may begin to question why your family does certain things. Share details that are age-appropriate. Be vulnerable. It's okay to not always have the answers or to apologize for modeling behavior you regret.

### ***With your Teenager:***

- Strike a balance between giving unwanted advice and listening. Allow some say in decisions that affect your adolescent. He won't always win, but he will open up more often if he believes you respect him and value his opinion.

