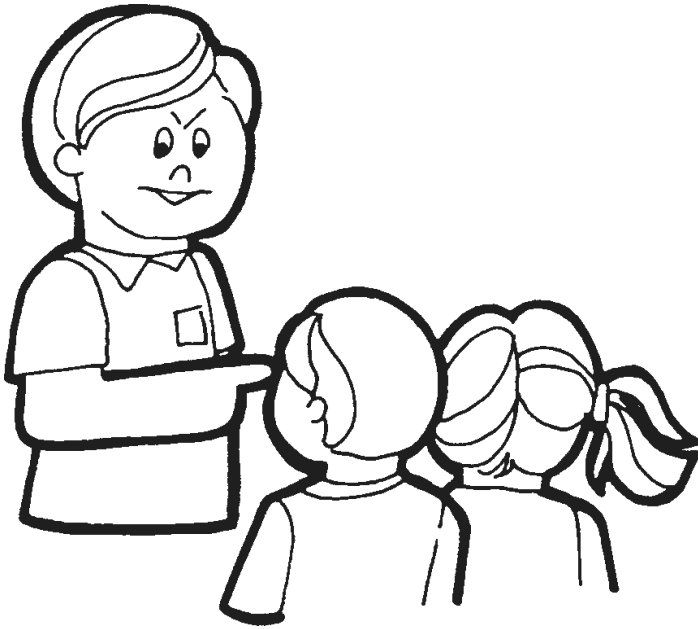
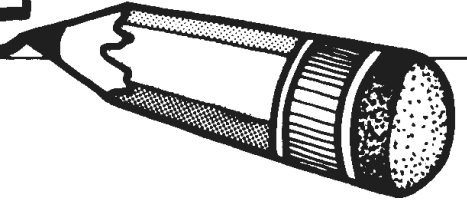


Parenting Pipeline

A newsletter for parents of second-grade children
from Iowa State University Extension



Parent Talk

How do you talk to your children?

Do you talk *to* them or *with* them?

Stop and listen. Would you want someone to talk to you that way?

Effective styles of parenting are based on mutual respect and open communication. Both parent and child allow each other to express feelings and ideas honestly, without fear of being rejected.

Guides to Effective Communication

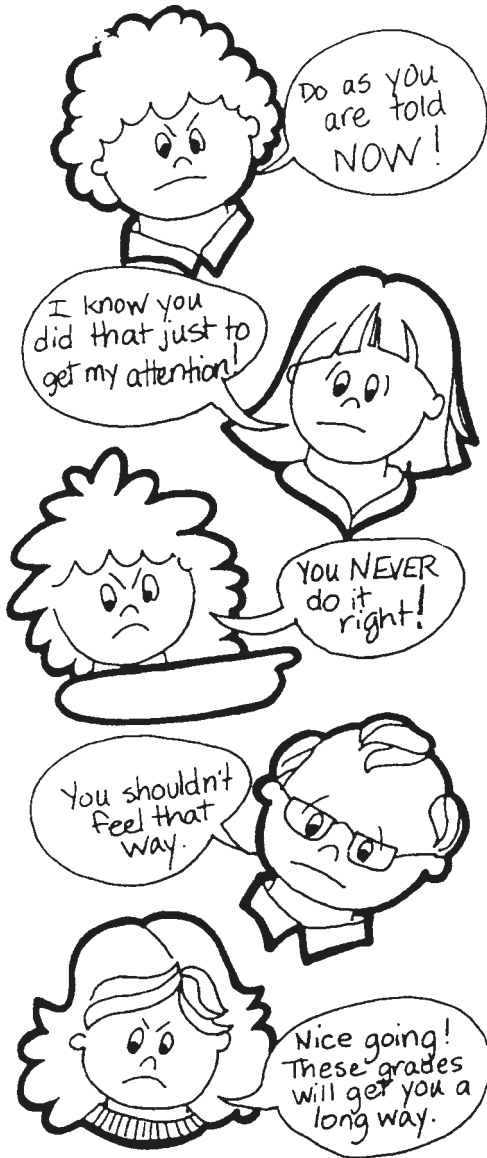
To improve communication with a child, a parent can:

- Test the water. Ask a question to determine whether or not your child wants to talk. For example, “Want to talk about how you’re feeling?”
- Learn to use responsive or reflective listening techniques. These methods provide a mirror for the child to see himself more clearly. For example:

Child: “I don’t know whether to go to Bob’s birthday party or go swimming with Jamie.”

Parent: “Sounds like you’re having trouble deciding.”

- Begin with the child’s feelings. For example: “You seem upset...”
- Pay close attention to the child when she is speaking.
- Maintain good eye and body contact.
- Accept the child as a person with feelings. Allow negative feelings as well as positive feelings to be expressed. For example:
 - Child: “I don’t like to go to school.”
 - Parent: “You’re feeling bad about school today.”
- Understand that feelings are ever-changing, not permanent.
- Know that expressing a feeling, especially a negative feeling, helps a child deal with that feeling.
- Treat your child with respect and dignity.
- Learn how to express yourself and your feelings with a responsive “I” message. For example: “I get frustrated when you slam the door.”
- Learn to discriminate between your problems and the child’s problems.
- Allow for failure and success. Resist the impulse to do it yourself. Allow the child to work out his feelings. Avoid attempts to “fix it” or “rescue” your child.
- Avoid threatening, judging, lecturing or ridiculing.



Here are some common parenting styles that will cause a child to feel inadequate and unacceptable. Do you recognize any of them?

COMMANDER – GENERAL STYLE

- “Do as you are told NOW!”
- Message sent: Commands and threats tell child his feelings or needs are not important. Usually causes resentment, rejection and hostility from child.

PARENT PSYCHOLOGIST

- “I know you did that just to get my attention.”
- Message sent: Parent knows child’s motives and parent is usually right. Child feels threatened, frustrated or embarrassed.

THE JUDGE

- “You never do it right!”
- Message sent: Child is inadequate, unworthy, stupid, bad. Child may become defensive and resentful.

THE PREACHER

- “You shouldn’t feel that way.”
- Message sent: Child’s judgment is not to be trusted. This may cause feelings of guilt, obligation and shame.

THE CYNIC

- “Nice going. Those grades are going to get you a long way.”
- Message sent: Child is bad, unloved and not appreciated. Lowers self-esteem. A true put-down.

Research indicates that the permissive (no rules, little guidance) and authoritarian (strict rules, very controlling) styles of parenting result in more problems for a parent and child as the child grows. Children are best able to grow and learn in a home that uses a positive, authoritative approach. Allowing children to express themselves and openly communicate with you is an important part of a positive approach.

Check with the local office of Iowa State University Extension for information on positive parenting workshops that might be offered in your area.

Adapted for use in Iowa from Parenting Pipeline, North Dakota State University Extension Service, by Donna K. Donald, family life field specialist, Iowa State University Extension.

This newsletter is published for families with second-grade children by Iowa State University Extension. For more information about parenting education, contact your local county extension office or access the Iowa State University Extension to Families website, www.extension.iastate.edu/families.

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