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TALKING WITH OUR CHILDREN

Center for Literacy

**University of Illinois
at Chicago**

Talking *with* your children gives them the opportunity to express themselves and to give you the opportunity to respond to their feelings, opinions and worries. This is different than talking *to* them. When you talk *to* a person only you are talking and only you take the opportunity to express yourself. Talking *with* your child will establish better communication between the two of you and bring more understanding.

-What can I talk to my children about?

TRADITIONS

- Share your pride in your family's culture and traditions. It is important to tell your children stories that your parents or grandparents shared with you as a child.
- Look at family pictures together. Children want to know about people and places related to you since it is also part of them.
- Share special stories with them. Write them down. If your children do not know how to read, they can help you draw the stories. Share family recipes and songs from your childhood, or share crafts you did as child or still do as an adult. Make a book of the activities you do to share with future generations.
- Share games and favorite rhymes that you enjoyed and played as a child.
- Read a book together and make up your own ending.

- Speak the language that you feel more comfortable with. Let the children know that knowing two languages is good.

- Learn and talk about the history of your own culture or the history of your own community.

EXPRESSING YOURSELVES

- Talk with your children. They need to know they are loved. Make them aware of your feelings. They need to know that you love them even when you are angry at them. Also, tell them how much you appreciate their good behavior.

- Listen to them with attention and interest. This is the best reward for their efforts.

- Do fun things together. Enjoy a sport, a game, a puzzle and similar things. Encourage them with questions about their feelings and opinions.

- Teach them to make their own decisions. If you have to answer their requests with a "no," explain to them your reason. Ask them: what would you do in my place? This will teach them to take and accept responsibilities.

- Do not set rules you know you are not going to follow. This will confuse your children about what you expect from them.

- Teach your child to be angry without hurting other people physically or emotionally (with hurtful words). Anger is a powerful feeling.

ENCOURAGE CURIOSITY AND INTERESTS

- Visit the library, museums and other public places. Let your children select the activities they are interested in. Ask questions and share answers with them.

- Teach your children the names of objects at home (table, chair, food, etc.), and the names of signs in the street (numbers and street names and store signs). The children will develop a better vocabulary.

- Pick a time of day every day just to sit with them. You can read, write or just talk. This is not the time to watch TV, listen to radio or talk on the phone. Remember that children imitate what they see. They will get used to share many things if you encourage it. They will get used to respect your opinions if you respect theirs.

- Do not react quickly to your children's behavior, their opinions or feelings. Listen to them and guide them by giving them other ideas. This will allow them to develop trust in you.