

## Strategies for Working with Children

### Talking to Kids

- Repeat what you heard
- Ask specific questions to gather more information
- Remember that you are bigger than the child – get down to her level by sitting or kneeling
- Offer limited choices. Offer two choices; having more than two choices may become confusing and overwhelming for the child
- Speak simply and ask the child to repeat what they heard to ensure they understand what you have said
- Rules should be simple and logical. Ensure consequences for breaking rules are simple, understood, and consistent
- If the child is raising his voice or gets angry: keep your voice calm and quiet. By remaining calm you will help calm the child

### More Information

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoGC1kcJ42E>
- [http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/strategies\\_7.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/strategies_7.html)

### Active Listening

Active listening skills are important when speaking with children and adults. Using these skills while talking to children will help ensure that you understand what the child is saying and feeling and that the child feels listened to and understood.

- Clarifying: Asking clarifying questions will help ensure that you understand what the child is saying to you. For example, “Sally took your marker and then you pushed her. Is that right?”
- Closed Questions: Closed questions are specific and help you gain more information about what the child is telling you. For example, “Did you push Sally after she took your marker?” Closed questions usually prompt a ‘Yes/No’ or other brief response.
- Open Questions: Open questions are general and offer space for elaboration and story-telling. For example, “What happened in Arts and Crafts today?”
- Reflection of Feelings: Reflecting a child’s feelings can help ensure that you understand what was going on for the child. For example, “It sounds like you were really angry at Sally for taking your marker”. Here, the child may say yes, or may say no and tell you how she was

- actually feeling. Either way, you ensure that you understand how the child was/is feeling.
- Minimal Encouragers: Body language and small encouragers help reassure the child that you are listening and that you care about what they are telling you. For example, eye contact, sitting and facing the child, nodding your head, facial expressions that match the child's expressions, "Mhmm's" or "I see", show the child that you are really listening and giving her your full attention.
  - Affirmation of Strengths: It is important to recognize the child's strengths. This will help motivate the child to use positive behaviour in the future. For example, "Thank you for being honest with me about what happened at Arts and Crafts today. I really appreciate your honesty".
  - Active listening tools taken from the book: Intentional Interviewing and Counselling by Allen E. Ivey

### Discipline

- Acknowledge positive behaviour whenever you can
- Do not making threats without consequences
- Be consistent when applying rules; ensure that rules are simple, brief, and understood by the children. Have them repeat rules, or write them down once they are set
- Set reasonable limits
- Pick your battles. Ignore unimportant behaviour
- Accept age-appropriate behaviour
- Apply consequences right away with younger children
- Be as unemotional as possible when setting consequences
- Do not shout or scream at your child. Keep your voice calm and controlled
- Clearly explain what rule the child has broken and why it is important to follow that rule. Be brief in explanation
- Tell the child that the correction is aimed at the unwanted behaviour and not at him personally
- <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/FamilyandPeerRelations/BehaviourManagement/Pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx>