

Cheltenham Communities That Care

TALK. THEY HEAR YOU.

Being a parent is a rewarding experience! Like anything, though, it has its challenges. As children grow, their wants, needs, and moods change. They may try new things, push their limits, and take risks. For parents, this can be difficult to navigate and may raise questions. How can I relate to and effectively communicate with my child? How can we create a solid foundation that can not only be built upon, but can flourish as they get older?

It all begins with talking! Try to set aside some time every day to talk with your child. Not every conversation has to be long and serious. Discuss interests, dreams, goals, TV shows, movies, and books. Or, plan an outing together; talk about what you're going to do and how much fun you're going to have. The topics for conversation are endless!

When you can talk to your child about the "easy stuff," you create common ground that establishes a foundation for having more difficult conversations. **When it's time for the hard talks, consider these tips:**

- Share the conversation; avoid monopolizing or controlling the flow of the conversation. Talk while your child listens and listen while your child talks.
- Be respectful, especially of each others' feelings. Explain to each other why you feel the way you do.
- Try to understand your child's perspective, even if you don't agree with it.
- Ask open-ended questions to get more than "yes" or "no" responses.
- Ask your child if it's okay to share your opinions, personal experiences, and any information or resources that you have. If your child says yes, you know that your input will not feel forced upon them. If your child says no, offer again at another time.
- Be honest and ask for honesty in return. Thoughtful and transparent conversations can build trust.

After you've talked with your child, remember that actions can be just as important as words! **Model the behavior that you want to see in your child** so they can see what it looks like firsthand.





Talking About the Tough Stuff with Your Child

Having conversations with your child about risky behaviors, substance use, and mental health issues can be difficult. How do you start the conversation? What do you say?

The **Talk. They Hear You.** app offers guidance on how to have these tough conversations. The free app, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), can help you **feel confident while having sensitive conversations with your child.**

Talk. They Hear You. will give you tips on:

- Adjusting the conversation as your child gets older
- Listening to your child's concerns and expressing your own
- Supporting your child's health, wellness, and achievements
- Being a good source of information
- Discouraging risky behaviors
- Developing techniques with your child for avoiding drugs, vaping, and underage drinking
- Exploring coping strategies with your child for maintaining positive mental health
- Discussing reasonable expectations, establishing appropriate boundaries, creating safety protocols, and enforcing fair consequences when clear and set standards are broken

Download the free Talk. They Hear You app and consult it for advice, sample conversations, and overall support.

RESOURCES

Talk. They Hear You.

www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you

Partnership To End Addiction

drugfree.org

PAStart Communication Action Series

PAStart.org

