


Listen, Talk, Answer -- Support Your Child's Learning

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Most children come home every day with stories to share. Do you stop what you are doing and listen carefully? Your child probably asks a lot of questions. Do you try to answer them? If you do, then you already know the benefits of giving your child time and attention. Teachers call these daily conversations powerful interactions. They help adults and children keep in touch and enjoy being together. These interactions also support children's learning. Here are some communication tips and examples of the types of things to say.

Acknowledge and accept all of your child's emotions.

This helps your child feel safe and secure and willing to share all kinds of feelings. "Are you feeling happy? I see a big smile on your face." "You look a little sad. Is there something you want to talk about?"

Describe what you see your child doing rather than just saying, "Good job."

He will know that you see and appreciate his efforts. "Wow, you've added lots of squiggly lines and circles to your drawing."

Help your child make connections to familiar experiences, ideas, or information.

"I know you like pineapple. Today we're having papaya for breakfast. I think you'll like it as much as pineapple. Let's see what you think."

Offer a small challenge to nudge your child to try something new or a bit harder.

"You ran so fast to the fence! This time, can you think of a really slow way to get there?"

Repeat and extend what your child says to you.

As your child looks through a book and says, "I like lizards," you might say, "I know you like lizards. What do you like about them?"

Use interesting words to build your child's vocabulary.

"I think this ice cream is delicious. I love the creamy texture and swirls of caramel."

Source: Adapted from A. Dombro, J. Jablon, & C. Stetson, 2010, "Powerful Interactions Begin with You", *Teaching Young Children* 4 (1): 12–13.

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