

Ten Tips for Talking With Your Children

Certainly we knew there'd come the time for the "big talk," but who knew we'd be struggling with how to talk to our children about drugs and AIDS and gay relationships, guns and violence at school, and kids who kill other kids.

Our world has grown more complex and the media, including the Internet, has swung wide the doors to information and misinformation. Talking with our children about difficult and often disturbing issues has never been more critical.

Following are some tips that may help.

- 1. It's never too soon to start.** Kids are hearing about issues at an earlier age.
- 2. Don't wait for them to ask.** Just because they haven't asked about something doesn't mean they don't want or need information.
- 3. Tackle subjects even if you're uncomfortable.** Set aside your own feelings and initiate dialogue.
- 4. Be open and encouraging.** Create an

environment in which any question can be asked at any time.

- 5. Be clear about your values.** Children want and need moral guidelines from their parents.
- 6. Don't just talk, listen.** You'll get information about how to approach an issue while building your child's self-esteem.
- 7. Be straightforward and honest.** You don't have to give all the details, but you do need to be honest.
- 8. Take time, be patient.** Unlike lunch, digesting new information can take time.
- 9. Don't wait for the "right time."** Be ready when opportunities arise. Daily life presents many openings for even a short dialogue.
- 10. Keep talking.** Information given in small doses over a period of time is the best way to have that "big talk."*

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