

# Communication Tip No. 4: Stay Positive

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When attempting to problem solve with a child, it can be challenging to stay positive. We all know kids can be frustrating and sometimes the easiest thing to do is to tell them what they're doing wrong and move on with your day. But if we're truly invested in strengthening our relationship with our children as well as enable them to strive for virtue, some of these tips are worth remembering:



**Don't immediately criticize a child** when they are recounting a situation or problem. Instead, ask questions that encourage them to think through what they could do better.

- Example: When a child is struggling with a class

- o Don't say: What's wrong with you? How could you be doing so badly?
- o Do say: Are you happy with your progress? How can we work together to form better study habits?

**Don't interrupt a child** when they are attempting to talk through something that has happened to them. Instead, listen so that they know you value what they have to say and then offer input and guidance.

- Example: When a child is trying to navigate trouble with a friendship

- o Don't interrupt and say: "Just apologize and move on!"
- o Do wait and say: "I see why this is upsetting you. Can I offer you some advice about how to heal your friendship?"

**Don't Monopolize the Conversation.** What can sound like a well-meaning lesson to us can come across as a one-sided lecture to children. Instead of interrupting, pick your moment to give the appropriate advice, reprimand or encouragement.

- Example: A older teen is discussing looking for a college

- o Don't: Spend the whole conversation talking about your own college search and how the college years were some of the best moments of your life.
- o Do: Ask questions based on your own knowledge and experience and, if helpful, briefly relate a lesson you learned during your own college application process.