

ideas for parents

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET #2: Positive Family Communication

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they and their parents communicate positively, and they are willing to seek parents' advice and counsel.

26%
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. "Parent communication" is one of six support assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States.

Open-Door Communication

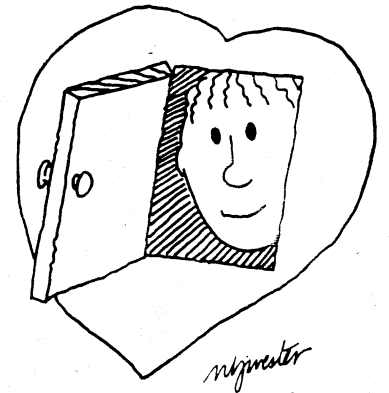
A conversation starts. Your child's upset. You're tired. Pretty soon, the conversation heats into an argument. Just as it escalates to the boiling point, someone backs away from the communication fire. A door slams. There's silence.

Arguments. We've all had them with our children. Sometimes it may feel like most conversations end with slammed doors.

Though it can be challenging to develop the skills, being available for frequent, in-depth conversations is an important role we play in our children's lives—from the time they learn to talk all the way into adulthood. What we have to do is create an atmosphere of communication—an open door.

The trick with open-door communication is that we often don't realize we create invisible closed doors around us. We get preoccupied and don't pay enough attention. We're exhausted, and we nod off in our child's mid-sentence. We jump to conclusions before our

child says things. We assume the worst. We attack our kids for what they tell us, so they close the door the next time out of fear or resentment.



Having an open door means having an open mind, an open attitude. It means listening to understand, not to advocate our position. It means being available when our children need us—and when they don't. It means taking good care of ourselves so that when our children want to talk, we have open ears and an open heart.

Helpful Hints

Tips that make communicating positively with your child easier:

- **Listen for your child's feelings. Name and validate them.**
- **Watch for hints: A child who hangs around usually wants to talk.**
- **Don't contradict what you say by doing the opposite.**
- **Be available, be open, be willing to drop what you're doing in order to talk.**

time together

Three ways to improve communication with your child:

1. Watch a television show or movie together. Ask your child what he or she thinks of the messages and values presented in the show.
2. Take your child out for breakfast. Talk about what is on your child's mind.
3. Schedule time each week for family meetings to talk about plans, concerns, celebrations, and other family issues.