

# COUNSELING CONNECTION



## NOVEMBER'S NEWSLETTER EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

BPA Student Support & Services

### The Importance of Communication

*One of the most important experiences adults can provide for children is to talk and listen to them.*

Good communication involves listening and speaking in ways that make children feel important and valued. Children who grow up in families that talk about emotions are more academically successful, have better friendships, have fewer infectious diseases, and handle difficult social situations more effectively than children whose families do not talk about feelings. (Bornstein, M. H., 1995)

As your children grow up, good communication will make it easier for you to talk about things like sex, alcohol, and drugs. Developing good communication skills helps parents catch problems early, support positive behavior, and stay aware of what is happening in their children's lives.

### What Does Effective Communication Look Like?

- Set aside time for talking and listening to each other. Turn off phones, computers, and television.
- Listen with your whole body. Give your child your full attention by facing them, making eye contact, getting down on your child's level if necessary to show that you are really listening.
- Observe and take note of children's emotions. Be open to talking about all kinds of topics and feelings.
- Tune in to what your child's body language is telling you, and try to respond to non-verbal messages. For example, "You're very quiet this afternoon. Did something happen at school?"
- Do not rush into problem-solving. Your child might just want you to listen and feel that their feelings and point of view matter.
- Ask the right questions. Begin by using open-ended questions such as "What," "Where," "How," "Whom" often requires an in-depth response that will keep a conversation going.

