

Children may clam up...

- when they are interrupted.
- when their adult listener is obviously bored or busy doing something else.
- when the adult takes over the discussion.
- when they have their pronunciation or grammar mistakes criticised.
- when they feel they are being questioned.
- when they feel disapproval.

Talking about worries

Sometimes children need to talk about worries, but don't know how to start. Recognise their feelings and gently prompt them. If you really don't have the time just then, make it clear that you will listen later on – and do! Find a quiet place where you can give your undivided attention. Help your child talk about their feelings. Find out what they would like to happen before taking over with adult solutions. It might be best to compromise. If the problem is serious and you need to act, try to stay calm. Strong adult emotions can scare children into silence.

For more parenting information and support:

Parentline ACT	(02) 6287 3833
Parentline NSW	1300 1300 52
Parentline NT	1300 30 1300
Parentline QLD	1300 30 1300
Parent Helpline SA	1300 364 100
Parenting Line TAS	1300 808 179
Parentline VIC	13 22 89
Parenting Line WA	08 9368 9368 (metro) 1800 111 546 (regional)

Parenting lines provide a telephone service providing information and good ideas about caring for babies and children.

Content consultants:

Gillian Lee (Clinical Psychologist)

Dr. Sue Roffey (Educational Psychologist)

Dr. Sue Packer AM (Community Paediatrician)

Dr. Bronwyn Gould AM (G.P., Child Protection Consultant)

NAPCAN is an independent charity and the leading advocacy body for prevention of child abuse and neglect.

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NAPCAN
PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

LISTENING TO CHILDREN

Listening to CHILDREN

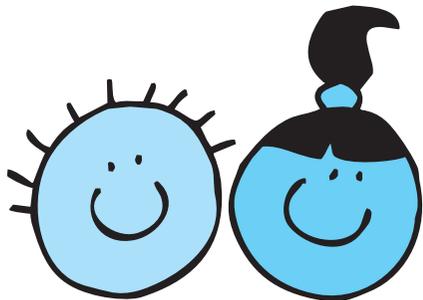


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Why listening to children is so important

Making a point of listening to every child you know is one of the most important things you can do. It shows children you really care and respect that they are worth listening to. This helps them feel they are special and respected. Being listened to also helps children to practice putting ideas into words, explore their feelings, and develop self-confidence. When you listen to your child, you benefit by learning more about how your child thinks and feels, and what they need.



Finding a time and place for talk

Children will chat more freely when they are doing something with you. This could be:

- Going shopping together
- Walking the dog
- Sitting at a table and sharing a meal
- Watching a TV program together
- Doing a puzzle or making something together

Bedtime is a great time to talk. Then your child knows you are a captive audience!

How to be a good audience

Really pay attention to what your child is saying, rather than doing or thinking about something else.

Show you are listening by nodding, smiling or mirroring the feelings in your child's story. Say things like, "Yes, I see" or "He didn't!"

Ask general questions like, "What happened then?" or "What did you think about that?" This helps children to develop their own ideas and shows that you are interested.

Encouraging children to talk

Ask about the best thing that happened in your child's day.

Remember what has been going on for your child so you can ask the best questions.

Ask about their friends.

Ask their opinions about things. Ask how they would solve problems. But respect their answers!

If you are reading a book with your children, discuss it with them. Pause at the end of each page for them to comment.

If your child doesn't respond to a question, don't push. Change the topic.

Remember that children live much more in the minute than adults. If they don't want to talk about what happened at school, it's probably because it's not important anymore!

