

Supper-Time Talk

*Did you know that “the more often children and teens eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink, or use drugs?”**

Talking together with your children at the supper-table can be the best part of your day! When you have meals together, turn off the TV or radio. If your kids don't talk readily, practice counting to ten after asking a question. Often children need time to think before they answer. Here are suggestions that can draw children into sharing thoughts, feelings, and information. Of course, you'll need to adjust them for your child's age and situation.

- 1) Ask questions that respond to signals the child is putting out:** “You seem worried [or moody, excited, tired, bored]. What's up? I'm willing to listen.” • “It looks like you had fun playing outside. Tell me about what did you.”
- 2) Show interest in work they bring home or create:** “That's a colorful drawing. Tell me about the part that shows a boy beside a house.” • “Was it hard to do those math problems?” • “What did you use to make that collage?” **If they've had failure or disappointment, say something like,** “That must feel awful. I know what it feels like to fail a test.” **Then remind them of their successes.** “Remember that you did very well in” **Look at their homework and talk about it.** “I see that assignment is about _____. How do you think you'll use that in your life?”
- 3) Share about your day:** “I met someone interesting today [tell about them]. Did you meet anyone or learn anything new about someone?” • “Today I did something I've never done before [tell about it briefly]. What about you?” • “I've got a deadline with _____ at work. I'm going to focus on it this weekend. What's your plan to meet your science project due date?”
- 4) Follow-up on previous chats:** “After what you told me yesterday, how did things go in math class?” • “What's happening with that new student?” • “What did your coach have you work on today?” • “How did things go at lunch?” • “Did you do anything with your new friend today?” • “Tell me more about....”
- 5) Ask about things you know they experienced:** “I know your teacher reads aloud to you everyday. What did he read about today? Was it a serious or a funny story?” • “What did the assembly speaker talk about?”
- 6) Invite remembering the day and its stories:** “So what happened in your day? • “What did you hear today that surprised you?” • “What made you laugh at school?” • “How did you demonstrate friendliness?” • “What news grabbed your attention?” • “What did you discover today?” • “Three things I feel grateful for today are.... What do you feel grateful for?”
- 7) Share your observations and ask for theirs:** “Coming home today I noticed the gorgeous sunset. What beauty did you notice? Let's look for pretty things in nature tomorrow.”
- 8) Bring up issues:** “What do you think we should do about [some problem]....” • “You don't like today's meal? Let's plan a menu together.” • “Something I'd like to ask for help with is What do you need help with?”



*From research by the National Center on Addiction & Substance Abuse at Columbia University.