



## COMMUNICATION—

Teach children to talk.

Creating a Home Where Hard Things Can Be  
Talked About

By Alvin Erickson

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### Why Communication Is Protective

Parents often believe communication means *talking to* their children.

In reality, protective communication means **children are willing to talk to you**.

When children do not have a safe place to bring confusion, fear, curiosity, or shame, they do not stop needing answers — they simply look elsewhere. And the people who step in may not have the child's best interest at heart.

Healthy communication does not prevent every mistake.

But it **dramatically reduces isolation**, secrecy, and vulnerability.

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### What Often Goes Wrong

Many parents unintentionally shut down communication by reacting too strongly when a child finally speaks up.

Common patterns include:

- immediate lecturing
- panic or anger
- moralizing too quickly
- punishment for honesty

Children learn fast. If telling the truth leads to trouble, **they stop telling the truth**.

Another mistake is waiting too long to talk — assuming certain topics will “come later.”

By the time parents bring them up, children may already have formed ideas from peers, media, or the internet.



## What Healthy Communication Really Is

Healthy communication is not:

- oversharing
- dumping adult anxiety onto children
- giving too much information too soon

Healthy communication *is*:

- age-appropriate honesty
- curiosity about what your child thinks
- calm listening
- ongoing conversations rather than one “big talk”

Communication works best when it is **normal, not dramatic**.

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## One Rule Parents Must Remember

**Never punish honesty.**

This does not mean there are no consequences for behavior.  
It means telling the truth is always met with **respect first**.

You can say:

- “Thank you for telling me.”
- “That took courage.”
- “Let’s think about this together.”

Then — and only then — address behavior or safety.

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## Real-Life Examples

### Example 1: Young Child (Ages 4–7)

**Child:** “A kid at school showed me something weird on his phone.”

**Unhelpful response:**

“What?! Who was it? That’s horrible!”

**Helpful response:**

“Thank you for telling me. What did you see?”

The goal is to **keep the child talking**, not shut them down with alarm.

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**Example 2: Elementary / Preteen**

**Child:** “My friend says everyone is doing this.”

Instead of arguing facts, ask:

- “How did that make you feel?”
- “What do *you* think about it?”

Children need help sorting their thoughts, not having them replaced.

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**Example 3: Teen**

**Teen:** “You wouldn’t understand.”

A powerful response:

“You might be right — but I want to try.”

That statement alone can reopen doors.

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**Starting Conversations Early (and Why It Matters)**

Children who talk easily with parents at age 6 are far more likely to talk at age 16.

Conversations should begin **long before middle school**, using simple language:

- about bodies
- about friendships
- about fairness
- about manipulation
- about right and wrong



Waiting until adolescence makes conversations feel sudden and suspicious.

Example:

An eight-year-old asks a question about his body that catches a parent completely off guard. Internally, the parent feels embarrassed and unprepared, but stays calm, answers the question honestly, and avoids making the child feel ashamed.

The answer matters, but the larger lesson is what the child learns:

**"I can talk to my parent about difficult things."**

Years later, that lesson may be far more important than the specific answer that was given.

## Practical Communication Habits

### 1. Use Natural Moments

- car rides
- bedtime
- walks
- after school

Eye contact is optional. Side-by-side conversations often work best.

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### 2. Ask Open-Ended Questions

- "What do kids say about that?"
- "What have you heard?"
- "What do you think about it?"

Avoid yes/no traps.

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### 3. Admit When You Don't Know

Saying "I don't know" models humility and honesty.

Follow it with:

"Let's find out together."



## What Communication Is *Not*

- It is not control
- It is not interrogation
- It is not moral lectures

If children feel examined, they retreat.

If they feel respected, they engage.

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## Age-Appropriate Guidance

- **Young children:** short answers, reassurance
- **Elementary:** simple explanations, values
- **Teens:** dialogue, not speeches

As children grow, communication shifts from instruction to **collaboration**.

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## Common Mistakes Parents Make

1. Talking too much
2. Correcting too quickly
3. Reacting emotionally
4. Waiting for the “perfect time”

There is no perfect time. There is only **now**.

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## One Guiding Principle

If your child brings something to you, treat it as a gift — even if it’s hard to hear.

That moment is trust.

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## Biblical Wisdom



## **James 1:19**

**"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."**

This speaks directly to the parent's role.

## **Proverbs 20:5**

**"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."**

This speaks directly to the child's heart.

Together they almost create a complete parenting philosophy:

1. Listen first.
2. Draw out what is hidden.

## **Practical wisdom/application**

### **James 1:19**

**"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."**

Most people hear:

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

and think about being patient or controlling their temper.

That's certainly part of it.

But imagine a parent applying that verse when a child finally says something difficult:

A child admits they made a mistake. —**Listen first**

.A child says they saw something disturbing online. —**Listen first**

A teenager says:

"You wouldn't understand." —**Listen first**

A child tells you something that scares or upsets you. —**Listen first**

The goal is not to have the perfect answer.



The goal is to keep the conversation open.

**Now consider Proverbs 20:5:**

**"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."**

Children often do not know exactly what they are feeling or how to explain it.

Wise parents learn to draw it out.

Instead of:

"Why did you do that?"

Try:

"Tell me more."

Instead of:

"That's a bad idea."

Try:

"What do you think will happen?"

Instead of immediately correcting:

Draw out what is hidden.

Communication is not about having all the right answers.

It is about listening well enough that children feel safe bringing their questions, mistakes, fears, and struggles to you.

## Final Takeaway

Communication is not about having the right words.  
It's about creating a climate where children **dare to speak**.

When parents become safe listeners, children are less likely to be isolated — and isolation is where harm grows.

## One Thing to Try This Week



## Option 1: Ask a Better Question

Instead of:

"Did you have a good day?"

Try:

"What was the most interesting thing that happened today?"

Other open-ended questions

- "What was the best part of your day?"
- "What was the weirdest thing you saw today?"
- "What is something kids at school are talking about?"

## Option 2: Create a Conversation Window

Spend 10 uninterrupted minutes with your child:

- during a car ride
- at bedtime
- on a walk

No teaching. No correcting. Just listen.

## Option 3: Practice "Tell Me More"

The next time your child tells you something, resist the urge to fix it.

Simply say:

"Tell me more."

Observe what happens.

· Wisdom Principle: Listen first.

# Lesson: Communication—Teach Children to Talk

*Creating a Home Where Hard Things Can Be Talked About*





## 1. Why Communication Is Protective

Parents often believe communication means *talking to* their children. **In reality, protective communication means children are willing to talk to you.**

When children do not have a safe place to bring confusion, fear, curiosity, or shame, they do not stop needing answers—they simply look elsewhere. And the people who step in may not have the child's best interest at heart.

**The Core Truth:** Healthy communication does not prevent every mistake. But it dramatically reduces isolation, secrecy, and vulnerability.

## 2. What Often Goes Wrong

Many parents unintentionally shut down communication by reacting too strongly when a child finally speaks up.

### Common Reactivity Patterns:

- **Immediate lecturing**
- **Panic or anger**
- **Moralizing too quickly**
- **Punishment for honesty**

Children learn fast: **If telling the truth leads to trouble, they stop telling the truth.**

### The Timing Mistake

Another mistake is waiting too long to talk—assuming certain topics will “come later.” By the time parents bring them up, children may already have formed ideas from peers, media, or the internet. **Conversations should begin long before middle school**, using simple language about bodies, friendships, fairness, manipulation, right, and wrong. Waiting until adolescence makes conversations feel sudden and suspicious.

## 3. Redefining Healthy Communication

| Healthy Communication Is NOT:         | Healthy Communication IS:              |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| ✗ Oversharing                         | Age-appropriate honesty                |
| ✗ Dumping adult anxiety onto children | Curiosity about what your child thinks |



| Healthy Communication Is NOT:          | Healthy Communication IS:                        |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| ✗ Giving too much information too soon | Calm listening                                   |
|                                        | Ongoing conversations rather than one “big talk” |

✦ **The Golden Rule:** Communication works best when it is normal, not dramatic. **Never punish honesty.** This does not mean there are no consequences for behavior; it means telling the truth is *always* met with respect first.

## 4. Real-Life Navigation

### The Three-Step Response Framework

When a child shares something difficult, try validating them first before addressing the behavior:

1. *“Thank you for telling me.”*
2. *“That took courage.”*
3. *“Let’s think about this together.”*

### Age-by-Age Examples

- **Young Child (Ages 4–7)**
  - *Child:* “A kid at school showed me something weird on his phone.”
  - ✗ *Unhelpful:* “What?! Who was it? That’s horrible!”
  - - *Helpful:*\* “Thank you for telling me. What did you see?”
  - *The Goal:* Keep the child talking, not shut them down with alarm.
- **Elementary / Preteen (Ages 8–12)**
  - *Child:* “My friend says everyone is doing this.”
  - *Instead of arguing facts, ask:* “How did that make you feel?” or “What do you think about it?”
  - *The Goal:* Help them sort their thoughts, not replace them with yours.
- **Teen (Ages 13+)**
  - *Teen:* “You wouldn’t understand.”
  - - *A Powerful Response:*\* “You might be right—but I want to try.”

## 5. Daily Communication Habits

### I. Use Natural Moments



- Utilize car rides, bedtime, walks, or the immediate after-school window.
- **Tip:** Eye contact is optional. Side-by-side conversations often work best because they lower the pressure.

## II. Ask Open-Ended Questions

- “What do kids say about that?”
- “What have you heard?”
- “What do you think about it?”
- **Tip:** Avoid yes/no traps.

## III. Admit When You Don’t Know

- Saying “I don’t know” models humility and honesty.
- Always follow it up with: “Let’s find out together.”

# 6. Foundations of Connection

## What Communication Is & Is Not

- **It is NOT:** Control, interrogation, or moral lectures. If children feel examined, they retreat.
- **It IS:** Collaboration. If they feel respected, they engage.

## Age-Appropriate Guidance

- **Young children:** Short answers, reassurance.
- **Elementary:** Simple explanations, values.
- **Teens:** Dialogue, not speeches.

## 4 Common Mistakes to Watch For

1. Talking too much
2. Correcting too quickly
3. Reacting emotionally
4. Waiting for the “perfect time” (*There is no perfect time. There is only now.*)

# 7. Deepening the Core Philosophy

## One Guiding Principle

If your child brings something to you, treat it as a gift—even if it’s hard to hear. That moment is trust.

## Wisdom Principles



## Adults Saving Kids

- **James 1:19** — *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."*
  - *Application:* This speaks directly to the parent's role. Most people think of this purely as controlling their temper. But imagine applying it when a child admits a mistake, shares something disturbing they saw online, or tells you something that scares you: **Listen first.** The goal is not to have the perfect answer; it is to keep the conversation open.
- **Proverbs 20:5** — *"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."*
  - *Application:* This speaks directly to the child's heart. Children often do not know exactly what they are feeling or how to explain it. Wise parents learn to draw it out instead of correcting.

[ THE PARENTING PHILOSOPHY ]

James 1:19  
(Listen First)



Proverbs 20:5  
(Draw Out What Is Hidden)

### Try Shifting Your Phrasing:

- **Instead of:** *"Why did you do that?"* → **Try:** *"Tell me more."*
- **Instead of:** *"That's a bad idea."* → **Try:** *"What do you think will happen?"*

## 8. Final Takeaway

**Communication is not about having the right words. It's about creating a climate where children dare to speak.** When parents become safe listeners, children are less likely to be isolated—and isolation is where harm grows.

## 9. Action Step: One Thing to Try This Week

Pick **one** of the following options to practice over the next 7 days:

- **Option 1: Ask a Better Question**
  - Instead of: *"Did you have a good day?"*
  - Try open-ended alternatives:
    - *"What was the most interesting thing that happened today?"*
    - *"What was the best part of your day?"*
    - *"What was the weirdest thing you saw today?"*
    - *"What is something kids at school are talking about?"*
- **Option 2: Create a Conversation Window**
  - Spend 10 uninterrupted minutes with your child during a car ride, at bedtime, or on a walk. **No teaching. No correcting. Just listen.**
- **Option 3: Practice "Tell Me More"**



## Adults Saving Kids

- The next time your child tells you something, resist the urge to fix or solve it. Simply say, "*Tell me more,*" and observe what happens.