



4-H School-Age Child Care  
University of California Cooperative Extension

# PARENT STYLES

## Tips for Busy Parents

### TALKING AND LISTENING

*Author: Sue Manglallan, 4-H Youth Development Advisor, San Diego County*

*An important gift you can give your child doesn't cost any money. This fabulous prize is the gift of conversation.*

#### What should we talk about?

Talk about anything and everything. Children wonder about everything around them. Dying, and people getting sick, fights, and, arguments . . . divorce and marriage . . . babies being born . . . jobs and money . . . skin color and different religious beliefs . . . thunder, lightning and earthquakes. You name it and your child will have questions or thoughts about the subject.

#### How do we get started?

- ★ Listen attentively. Get rid of all distractions and pay attention to what your child is saying. (Television and radio should be turned off.) Do not pretend to listen when you aren't. If you are busy, suggest that you talk later, then be sure to follow through.
- ★ Talk with children not at them. Talking "at" the child is one sided conversation... "Put on your coat;" "you're going to spill that." Use two-way conversation, talking and listening to what the child has to say.
- ★ Use Door Openers. Door openers invite the child to say more, to share ideas and feelings. They tell the child

that you are really listening. Examples: "I see," "Tell me more," "That's interesting," "Really?," "How did that make you feel?"

- ★ Children like simple uncomplicated answers. Sometimes children don't even want an answer. You can encourage the child to continue talking by saying something like "that's an interesting question." "What do you think?" If you answer complicated questions be sure to tell the truth, there is no harm in saying you don't know.

#### How can I find the time?

Each family needs to look at its schedule and find the time to chat. It could be over meals, at bathtime or bedtime. Sometimes the best conversations happen in the car. The car may be the place to discuss the child's day at school. It doesn't need to be the same time every day. If there is more than one child in the family each child needs his/her own time with a parent. To have a parent all to oneself is comforting to a child. It enforces that the child is important and has valuable thoughts and feelings.

Resource: Notes for Parents by James Hymes, Hacienda Press, Cannel, Ca.

Winning Ways to Talk with Young Children by B. Schench and D. Riley, PH.D., CE, University of Wisconsin

**Dream Streamers**

Working on a project or craft activity is one way to promote conversation with your child. Following are instructions for making DREAM STREAMERS.

This activity will give you an opportunity to share your dreams with your child and learn more about your child's dreams.

**What You'll Need:**

- Two pieces of construction paper
- Pencil, pens or crayons
- Scissors
- Yarn

**What to do:**

- ☆ Draw a large circle on the construction paper. Upside down bowls make great templates.
- ☆ Draw a circular trail that leads to the center of the circle.
- ☆ Write your dreams or messages along the trail. (You can also color or decorate the trail.)
- ☆ Cut out the circle and then cut along the trail lines. The circle will now uncoil.
- ☆ Punch a hole in the tip of the streamer. Attach yarn through the hole and tie a knot.
- ☆ Display both of your DREAM STREAMERS. Talk about what was written along the trails.

