

## Improving Family Communication

*Our closest relationships are often with our families. They can be a source of support, but also a source of tension. These tips are designed to help you create an environment for positive communication in your family.*

**Listen more than you talk:** Your family member could be helped just by knowing someone is really listening. Instead of jumping in with advice, take time to listen and truly understand the other person's perspective.

**Encourage Open Dialogue:** Welcome the thoughts and feelings of your family members without judgement or criticism, validate their emotions and experiences without rushing to "fix" things.

**Look for non-verbal cues:** Not everyone is good at telling you what they are feeling, take the time to notice and understand what your family members are telling you through their facial expressions and body language.

**Set Aside Regular Time to Connect:** Establishing a ritual of regular family time can help maintain strong communication.

**Don't just focus on small talk:** Conversations about day to day activities and interests are important, but you can also try and dig deeper, and listen actively to get to know more about your family members.

**Limit Distractions During Conversation:** Put your phones and devices away and turn the television off when you're trying to talk together.

**Be direct:** Say what you think and feel. Take the time to explain what you are going through, and give clear examples.

**Timing is key:** Think about when your message will be well received. Be aware the time is not always right for big conversations. Rather than getting angry or shutting someone out, you can agree on when it would be best for you both to come back to the conversation.

**Appreciate your differences:** You may not view life the same way as other family members and you won't approve of all the choices they make. Make sure they know they can come to you, even when you don't agree with them.

**Try different communication strategies:** As well as differences in personalities and interests, family members will have different communication styles, and it's important to learn how each person likes to give and receive information and support.



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**Celebrate achievements and express gratitude:** Acknowledging the work your family member has put in, such as cooking a meal, or letting them know when you're proud of their efforts and achievements can help build a supportive, positive atmosphere.

**Do what you love together:** It can be hard to make time for having fun as a family. However, participating in an activity that you all enjoy can strengthen your bonds and promote future positive interactions.

**Sources:**

<https://stepttogether.gov.au/support-and-advice/for-family-and-friends/how-to-strengthen-family-communication.html>

<https://www.ballaratpsychologyclinic.com.au/blogs/improving-family-communication>