

COMMIT TO CARING COMMUNICATION



Askable Adult Campaign
Be someone they can talk to.

Effective communication between adults and youth is critical to building connections. Both how adults communicate with youth and what they communicate about are important. You can become more askable by communicating in a way that sends the message that you are approachable, willing to do the work, and that you care.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING IN CARING COMMUNICATION WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE:

Put away judgment. It's the number one concern for youth in their relationships with adults.

Ask what they need then listen deeply. Youth most often just want to be listened to and heard. Adults most often jump right into problem-solving. When a young person comes to you to talk, ask if they just want to vent and be listened to or if they want feedback and to problem solve. If you make this your good habit, youth will feel heard and you will know what they need.

WAIT! Why Am I Talking? Ask yourself this a lot. Sometimes adults dominate conversations with children and youth because we feel we need to always be teaching them what we know. Youth often want useful advice, but not always—sometimes they just want to be listened to. Balance talking with listening. Try a 1:3 ratio where children and youth drive the conversation: For every 15 minutes, are you talking more than 5?

Lean in. Be interested and learn. Be interested and curious about what matters the most right now to the children and youth in your life. Ask questions! Ask them how they are doing, what excites

them, what their hobbies are, and how their relationships are going. Ask about and validate their concerns and worries. Work to understand young people's points of view when they share ideas or opinions. Learn from young people—and show it. Youth have a lot to teach adults. Let them know when you've learned something from them that you're excited about.

Talk about your boundaries and limits. All adults have limits and boundaries in their relationships with youth whether you're a parent, teacher, youth worker, family member or friend. Young people appreciate knowing what limitations exist for you. Telling them upfront models honesty, dependability, predictability, and integrity and helps youth talk about their own boundaries and succeed in their communication with you. For example, let youth know your limits about connecting on social media and what your boundaries are around time of day and best ways to communicate (texts, email, phone calls, etc.).

Support their processes and remember yours. Emphasize mistakes as necessary parts of learning. Praise youth for hard work, whether they succeed or fail. If it is helpful, ask if they'd like you to share how you managed relevant situations when you were their age. Remember careful boundaries when deciding what personal information to share; you don't have to tell them everything to show meaningful support.

Be a source of appraisal and honesty. Children and youth appreciate positive and honest feedback (*Your hard work really paid off! or I see that you're struggling here*), affirmation (*You have really grown since solving that problem!*), and constructive feedback (*Do you want feedback? Another way to approach this might be...*).

Understand what's happening in their lives. Use what is happening in pop culture, the news, and daily life as conversation starters. Take a shot at listening to music and watching media that is important to the youth in your life. Or, ask them what they're listening to/watching these days. Then, let them lead the conversations.

Revisit difficult conversations in small doses. This will show that you care and are able to give conversations room to grow and evolve as you each become more comfortable.

Don't give up! Believe you can do it! Understand that it can be challenging.

Resources:
www.searchinstitute.org; <https://cssp.org>



The Askable Adults Campaign is a project of the Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence. Find more tools and information about the campaign at

vtnetwork.org