

Parents Listen Up!

Articles from the Living Well Section

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Have you ever asked your children how their day at school was only to have them answer “fine”? Have you ever asked them what they learned that day and they answered “nothing”? Have you ever wondered, “Why bother? Am I getting through to them at all?”

The answer is yes, you are. In all of those little moments when you’re asking the questions that never seem to get a straight answer (Is your homework done?) or when you’re giving them pearls of wisdom (Do what you need to do, so that you can do what you want to do), you are using part of your anti-drug tool kit.

Studies show that spending time with children greatly reduces the chance they will use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Parent communication is the most effective method to combat the negative influences that bombard our children. The more parents are involved in children’s everyday lives, the more likely they will feel comfortable talking when faced with temptations and challenges.

The first step to improved parent/child communication is just do it. The smallest moments count. Here are some tips to help you carve out connection time.

- Five minutes can make a difference. Any time can be a good time to talk — in the car between errands, while walking to school, or before a goodnight hug.
- Feel like you’re not getting any answers? Ask open-ended questions such as “How did that make you feel?” or “Why do you think that happened?”
- Make it a point to eat meals together whenever you can.
- Schedule weekly family time like Friday night board game or movie night.

- Look for opportunities to talk about negative behaviors on television or in the movies. Your guidance is critical.

- When your children talk to you, listen. Sometimes they just want to know that they are heard and loved, no matter what they are going through.

And remember, they really do want to hear from you even when they say they don't; they really are listening even when you think they're not. You do make a difference.