

# Employee Assistance Program

## Communicating with Children

One of the most important experiences adults can provide for children is to speak to their child and listen to them.

Here are communication tips for children of different ages:

**Infants:** Infants communicate with coos, gurgles, facial expressions, cries, body movements like cuddling or back arching, eye movements such as looking towards and looking away, and arm and leg movements. Using a sing-song, high-pitched tone of voice when speaking to infants helps to keep their attention.

**Toddlers:** Toddlers communicate with gestures and short sentences, emotional expressions, and body movements. Adults can encourage communication by building on their sentences and helping them label their emotions. It's best to give toddlers one direction at a time and talk them through routines so they know what to expect. During play, follow their lead and let them create the play.

**Preschoolers:** Preschoolers often talk to themselves when playing and working on tasks such as puzzles or art activities. Encourage preschoolers to talk about their feelings, both positive and negative. Provide opportunities for them to engage in pretend play and use their imaginations.



Employee Assistance Program  
**1-866-EAP-4SOC (1-866-327-4762)**  
TTY users should call 1-800-424-6117  
Visit us online: [www.eap.calhr.ca.gov](http://www.eap.calhr.ca.gov)



### Communicating with Older Children:

**School-age children:** Use conversation as a way to keep up with activities, likes, dislikes, and peer relationships, and help them set goals and learn to handle conflict. School-age children ask more questions and can understand and talk about the viewpoints of others. When correcting the child's behavior, provide a calm explanation for your reason.

**Adolescents:** This can be a challenging time as children are starting to become more independent. It is helpful to be firm but flexible, and keep the lines of communication open. Stay interested in the adolescent and gently ask questions to gain a better understanding of his/her perspective.



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