

Listed below are a variety of additional resources available to you.

## Bright Start Responsive Parenting

This project is funded by the State of South Dakota Office of Child Care Services. This six-week series of classes is designed for parents that have children ages birth to three years. Classes cover a variety of topics including: discipline, temperament, and stress. Classes are FREE and child care may be available.

## Infant/Child CPR

This program is designed to give parents, child care providers, and other adults information and skills on CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation). These classes are ongoing throughout the year.

## Insight for Children

These classes are designed to give information about how children develop and why they do the things they do. Topics include sibling issues, temperament, and childhood behaviors. Classes vary in length and are FREE.

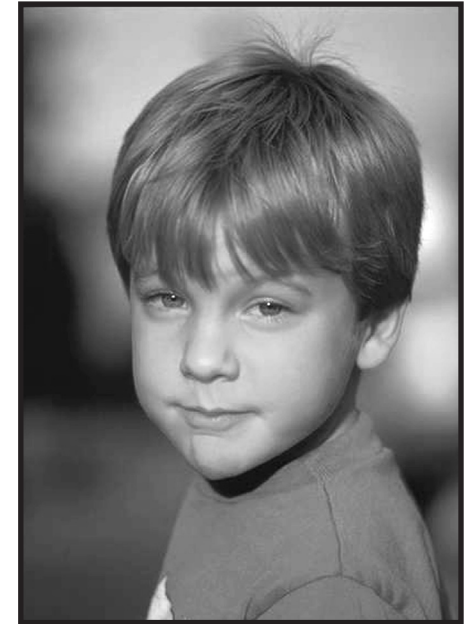
## Temperament Project

This project is funded by the Sioux Empire United Way Success By Six Program. Services provided are FREE. Learning about temperament can help with discipline issues, behavior concerns, and social development. Individual temperament consultations are available, as well as temperament screenings.

## Mutch Woman's Health Library

Various materials of interest to women are available for check-out at the Women's Resource Center. Books, videos, and pamphlets cover a variety of topics including but not limited to: parenting, stress, and health information.

# Is Anyone Listening?



## Children and Communications

Sanford Children's C.H.I.L.D. Services  
is located at:  
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# Children and Communication

## Are You Listening?

“Did you hear what I said?” or “How many times do I have to tell you?” are common pleas heard among adults that live and/or work with children. Communicating with children can be a daily challenge - a challenge that can be made easier if one takes time to listen to what children are saying.

## Behavior Talk

Children communicate through words and behaviors. Many times their behaviors speak louder and clearer than words. A child's behavior can tell us something positive or negative.

A negative behavior can be compared to a fever at the time of an illness. Just as a fever tells us something is physically wrong, a child's inappropriate behavior may tell us something is wrong physically, emotionally or mentally. To treat a fever correctly, you need to know the cause. If you only treat the symptom, the illness may linger or get worse.

This analogy is similar to a child's inappropriate behavior. Identify the cause; just treating the symptom (a behavior such as a 4 year-old hitting) with continual time-outs may not be treating the cause; i.e. (a tired child under the stress of moving to a new home). Communicating with children is more effective when you listen carefully and sensitively to a child's behavior.

Sometimes children are clearly telling us things with their behavior. At times, we try to interpret a child's behavior by asking every adult what they think is causing the behavior, “Why do you think he does ... ?” Sometimes we just need to ask the child.

This simple hint is clearly noted in the following example: A 3-year-old child had been sleeping on the floor beside her bed for months. The concerned mother asked several adults what they thought the reason could be for this behavior. Finally, the mother asked her daughter, “Why don't you sleep in your bed?” The daughter replied, “My sheets are cold.” Flannel sheets solved the dilemma. Sometimes we just need to ask the children.

## Nonverbal Talk

Nonverbal communication often has more impact than verbal words. Children watch adults intensely from birth to adulthood. Our eyes, tone of voice and posture often send contradictory messages to our verbal words.

Remember that children will listen to the nonverbal cues first. If you tell a child to do a task, but there is a hint of guilt or hesitancy in your tone of voice or facial expressions, a child hears that this task may not need to be taken seriously. Children do what you do. They watch your actions and try them out themselves.

Just as children hear if we are “serious” about our request by our nonverbal expressions, they hear if we respect them as individual human beings. Our impatient tones, sighs and rolls of the eyes often send children messages that lead them to believe we “don't like” them. This belief can build a communication block as a child learns to not hear what we say to protect their own self-esteem.

## Specific Talk

Remember to be specific if you want a child to do a specific task. Don't be surprised to find everything in the closet or under the bed if you have just told your 5-year-old, “Clean your room.”

Children need to know what specific steps are expected with such a demand. Remember to limit the number of expected steps with younger children. If you expect a 5-year-old to clean her room, you will need to show her how and then outline the steps specifically until this task becomes a habit. Comments such as “Hang your clothes in the closet,” or “Put your books on this shelf,” communicate to the child your specific expectations.

Children need to hear that we will be there for them during their happy times, their sad times, their times when they make mistakes and their times when they don't know why they act like they do. They hear this support and acceptance from us through our verbal and nonverbal responses.

Try to focus more on the listening, rather than the telling - you will learn more from children if you take time to listen.

For more information, call  
Sanford Children's C.H.I.L.D. Services  
(605) 333-0698