Stanislaus County
Office of
Education

Child/Family Services

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TALKING WITH PARENTS

Resource & Referral Handout

1. **Be positive.**

   Talk about the good things you see in the child. Show that you are interested and want to help.

2. **Work with the parent.**

   Stress the idea that you need to work together. Tell them how important their help is. Use their help.

3. **Be flexible.**

   Talk to the parents on their own level. Meet in a comfortable place at a mutually convenient time. Do not present your ideas first. Seek their opinions and work together on plans solicited from them.

4. **Be a good observer.**

   Notice both what the parent says and what he does not say. Be aware of bodily tension hesitation, excitability, etc.

5. **Listen.**

   Do not interrupt to say what you would have done. Be attentive and nod to show that you are listening and are interested.

6. **Begin where the parent is.**

   Help him feel relaxed and comfortable. Encourage him to talk. Find out what he likes about his child, what his concerns are, and where he wants to go next. Think developmentally.

7. **Ask leading questions.**

   Facilitate conversation by asking questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. Avoid putting answers in the parent’s mouth. Some leading questions might be: What does he do when _____? How do you feel when _____? What do you do when _____? How do you discipline your children?

8. **Make comments thoughtfully.**

   Use your comments to reassure, to encourage, or to carefully direct parents to relevant matters. Make sure you use the language of the parent.

9. **Answer personal questions.**

   Be frank, brief and truthful. Then try to redirect the conversation back to the parent.

10. **Good relationships take time.**

    Working with parents is a process. It takes time to develop rapport and trust. Don’t try to do everything in one short meeting. The more difficult the problem, the more meetings it takes.

Institute for Research on Exceptional Children,
University of Illinois. (1974)