

## Conversations with your Little

### 1. Model a Good Conversation

Conversation enhancers include responses and prompts like:

"Really?"

"Wow!"

"That's interesting."

"No kidding!"

### 2. Encourage Physical Cues

Identify procedures for having a conversation that includes appropriate non-verbal behavior. For example, you might teach a strategy like S.L.A.N.T. (Sit up straight. Listen. Answer and ask questions. Nod to show interest. Track the speaker.)

### 3. Challenge Put-Downs or Hurtful Comments

For example, if your Little says, "I think what she did was really stupid," challenge with "How else can you say that without being hurtful?" If they seem unaware, teach an alternative like, "I disagree with that." Ask them to repeat what you said and then move on to:

"What happened to make you feel that way?"

"How would you have handled things differently?"

"Do you think there is only right answer, or could there be more?"

### 4. Ask Open-Ended Questions

These are questions without one correct answer, questions that stimulate discussion and can be a very powerful way to reinforce the idea that there are different views of an issue, or a set of beliefs that can be equally valid. For example: "So if Columbus came knocking on your door and told you that sailing to the New World would be an amazing adventure and there might be lots of riches there, but you might never arrive because the world was flat, would you go?"

### 5. Put Thinking Ahead of Knowing

When asked a question, don't accept "I don't know." Tell your Little that you don't require them to "know" but that you do expect them to "think." Teach them how to wonder aloud, speculate, guess or give the best answer they can. ("I'm not sure about that, but I think \_\_\_\_\_.")

### 6. Make Eye Contact

When your Little is talking and you are listening, give him or her your eye contact.