

How To Build Healthy Relationships: GIVE

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Summer is finally here! This means no more trying to force your kids to finish their schoolwork (at least for the next few weeks, anyway). Although many kids continue to do a little bit of reading and other school-type work over the summer to keep their skills fresh, their main goal has shifted from trying to get through the school year to trying to have as much fun as they can before they go back. Number one on most kids' priority list this summer: play as much and as often as possible! For some kids, this means playing as many hours of video games as their parents will let them get away with. Some of these games may be solo games, but many include social aspects where they need to work together with others to reach a common goal, and include a lot of within-game communication. Some kids want to spend as much time with friends as they possibly can, whether that's through video chats or in person. No matter how they are getting their social interaction in these days, maintaining good relationships with the people they are spending time with can be tough. Here are a couple social skill tips that can help!

One of the strategies we teach to help people maintain healthy relationships through effective communication comes from a Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) perspective, and uses the acronym GIVE. Each letter stands for a way to help build and keep healthy relationships. We encourage everyone to try and do their best at each of these skills when interacting with important people in their lives, in order to maintain these good relationships.

- G-** Be Gentle. This means to be kind and respectful to everyone around you, and keep a calm tone of voice. When you are kind to your friends and family, they will likely want to spend more time with you because they enjoy your company. Examples of this include using a non-judgmental stance, giving caring feedback and giving compliments.

- I-** Act Interested in what others are saying. If you are looking at your phone or looking around the room when someone is talking to you, or interrupting them every time they try to talk, they may think that what they are saying is not important to you, and that can make them feel like **THEY** are not important to you. When you act interested in what others are saying by maintaining eye contact, nodding, and responding at appropriate times, people feel understood and important.

- V-** Validate the other person's emotions. To do this, you have to pay attention to what they are saying, and reflect back to them what they said, without adding in your own judgments, like saying "What you're saying is..." Communicate to them that you understand what they are saying, and acknowledge that they are making a valid point. Treat them as an equal; don't treat them as incompetent or fragile.

- E-** Have an easy manner. Smile often! Use humor by making people laugh (but not making fun at their expense). Use nonthreatening body language. Try to be agreeable, or willing to negotiate.