



Tips For Talking With Your Child About Their Disability

Every child is different- there is no one size fits all approach and how you treat your child means more than what you say. Planning ahead for these conversations will help you feel more comfortable and knowledgeable in guiding your child through understanding their disability.



Acknowledge Your Child's Disability

When you're willing to talk openly with your child, they're less likely to feel ashamed or embarrassed about their disability. They'll also be better equipped to explain their disability to others once you've talked about it.



Keep Information Age Appropriate

Be honest and give your child information in the simplest terms. Use books, pictures, toys, and simple language. You can use phrases like "Your muscles struggle to work with your bones" or "This medicine helps your lungs work better."



Encourage Your Child To Ask Questions

Help your child to feel comfortable to ask questions. Make it clear you are open to answering their questions. Identify other trusted adults who would be willing to answer their questions.



Focus On Your Child's Strengths

Invest time in building your child's confidence by also talking about their strengths. Make it clear their disability does not define them. A child who can recognize skills and talents is much more likely to feel competent and confident.



Help Your Child Identify What To Say To Others

Other children, or even adults may ask your child questions about their disability. While your child doesn't owe anyone any explanations, helping them to develop a script to respond to questions can help them feel more comfortable if they choose to respond. Role play with your child different ways they could respond to various questions or comments. Practicing positive dialog will help your child increase their self-confidence.



Dialog Will Evolve As Your Child Grows

Your child's questions about their disability will change over time. When your child enters puberty or begins to think about career options, keep the lines of communication open as your child will likely have new questions.



Seek Support

Seek support through your child's physician, school, or find parent support groups. Go to www.f2fmichigan.org for more information and resources.

Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center

(MIF2F) exists to share resources, information, and learning opportunities for families of children and youth with special health care needs across Michigan, and also for the community partners and healthcare providers who care for them.

MI F2F offers:

- Information and resources related to caring for a child or young adult with special healthcare needs.
- Parent peers and individuals with experience navigating the maze of special health care services and programs.
- A network of Family Leaders across Michigan to help us identify community supports and resources for families.

www.f2fmichigan.org



The Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center is a project of the Michigan Public Health Institute. It is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau grant H84MC26214. The information or content and conclusions of the author should not be construed as the official policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.