

# How Important Is Eye Contact?

Eye contact is a social skill that usually reflects the degree of a person's comfort in social relationships.

Is poor eye contact just a habit or is there more to it?

Children that are shy by nature or nurture frequently do not give good, sustained eye contact. Commonly low personal esteem is part of this picture.

Non-compliant children either do not give good eye contact or they give a stare that says "make me". Cooperation (bending one's will for the good of the group) is associated with good eye contact. There is just something about good eye contact and a cooperative spirit that go together.

Good eye contact can enhance the accuracy of verbal communication. Listening is hard work. We all have bad listening habits. We tune out certain people when they begin to speak. There are some voices or sounds that are either pleasing or irritating to our ears. Auditory sustained attention may be a strength or weakness. If our auditory sustained attention is weak, good eye contact is just that much more important.

So how important is eye contact?

VERY

Can eye contact be improved? Yes.

1. Model good eye contact by using it in every direct face to face personal interaction, especially when your child is talking to you.
2. Encourage your child to give good eye contact and let him/her know that it is important to you.
3. Assist your child in building personal esteem by focusing on effort and improvement rather than on the finished product.
4. Strengthen other social and personal skills to build confidence and experience the overflow of improved eye contact.
5. Do give your child good eye contact when you talk to him/her and expect the same.
6. Avoid being critical, accusatory, demeaning or harsh.
7. Listen with a desire to learn from your child and in your speaking, use a tone of voice and body language that make it easy for your child to listen to you.

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