This Tip Sheet was developed to provide guidance for how child and adolescent psychiatrists can more effectively communicate and partner with young people.

1. **Learn how to talk to us, and get to know us:**
   - Learn our names, and talk to us with interest and respect.
   - Show us genuine concern, so we know that what we say really matters to you.
   - Learn about our lives, and have a conversation with us as people.
   - Look at us and not just our file, when you talk to us.
   - Use words we understand, not jargon.
   - Ask us questions, to help us become active during our meetings.
   - Remember that we notice your tone and your reactions to us, not just what you say.

2. **Be youth-friendly, and learn about youth culture and other aspects of our culture:**
   - Put things in your office like games and magazines to help us feel comfortable.
   - Ask us about our interests, and show us you know something about what we like to do.
   - Ask us how we would like to communicate with you.
   - Learn about Facebook and other social media, and consider creating your own website.
   - Learn about our religion, ethnicity, race, gender, and other parts of our culture.

3. **Listen to us, because we typically don’t feel heard:**
   - Understand that it takes time for us to trust, and we may not say too much at first.
   - Be patient with us, and try to understand where we are coming from.
   - Remember that we know what’s going on in our lives better than anybody else, and we know ourselves best.
   - Take what we say seriously, even if you don’t agree.
   - If you don’t understand something we say, ask us to explain.
   - Recognize that we won’t always say what you want to hear.
   - Don’t be judgmental, because this will shut us down.
   - Try not to make us feel rushed – spend time with us.

4. **Provide us information:**
   - We have a right to information, and we believe that information is power.
   - We can’t make informed decisions if we don’t understand what is going on with us.
   - Explain our diagnosis, and how our condition can be treated.
   - If you believe that medication will help us, explain this to us in plain language.
   - Use drawings and pictures to show us how medication works.
   - Give us written material that we can read, in the office and at home.
   - Tell us about other treatments to consider – in place of, and in addition to, medication.
5. **Understand that we are likely to be afraid, and we may get frustrated and angry:**
   - We have problems. Take the time to find out the best way to help us, because we are not all the same.
   - We don’t like having a mental health problem, and we don’t like having to be a patient.
   - We don’t want to feel different from everyone else, and we don’t want to be rejected because we are different.
   - While we believe that you can help us, we’d rather not have to see you at all.
   - We’re afraid of what you will think of us.
   - We’re afraid you will believe our family and not us, when our stories are different.
   - We worry about being sent straight to the hospital when we see you, or being placed in a residential facility away from our friends and family.
   - If hospitalization is necessary, communicate clearly that it is not a punishment, it is not our fault, and you will not abandon us.

6. **Understand our concerns about medication:**
   - Even if we need medication, we’d prefer not to have to take it.
   - We’re concerned about being over-medicated, and we’re afraid of possible side effects.
   - Taking medication is very personal, and we don’t want the whole world to know our business.
   - We need reassurance that taking medication doesn’t mean that we’re crazy.
   - We also need to know that we are in charge of our bodies, not the medication.

7. **Give us choices, and offer alternatives:**
   - We’ll be more open to treatment if you let us know that there is more than one way to move ahead.
   - Explain the various alternatives, with medications and with other treatments, and help us understand the pros and cons of each.
   - You can tell us if you think a treatment is really important, but understand that we may or may not be ready and we have a right to refuse.
   - Explain our legal rights to us, throughout treatment.
   - Give us information about other respected providers, in case we want a second opinion.

8. **Offer us hope:**
   - We need your encouragement and support.
   - We need you to reassure us that things can get better.
   - Tell us about others you’ve treated who have gotten better.
   - Understand how important our friends are to us, and help us stay involved with them.
   - Encourage us to seek out community supports.
   - Encourage us to stay involved in our treatment and not give up hope.
9. **Learn to deal effectively with our parents/caregivers and with us:**
   - Don’t forget that you are our doctor, not our parent.
   - Talk to our parents/caregivers, but maintain our confidentiality and let us know what you will be talking with them about.
   - Be clear about the limits of our confidentiality, such as limitations due to concerns about our safety.
   - Don’t always believe the adult over us. It may just be that we have different opinions or perspectives.
   - Try to bring us and our parents/caregivers closer together, when there is disagreement or conflict.
   - Give our parents/caregivers information, and offer them hope.
   - Inform them of resources in the community.

10. **Treat us the way you would want your own child to be treated:**
   - Don’t blame us for our problems.
   - Remember that we are more than our diagnosis, and we are more than just a patient.
   - Teach us coping skills.
   - Help us manage our own lives, without lecturing or telling us what to do.
   - Work with our therapist, the school, and others involved in our lives.
   - We need you to be part of our team.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

www.aacap.org  
www.activeminds.org  
www.thebalancedmind.org  
www.bringchange2mind.org  
www.chadd.org  www.friendshipscount.org  
www.inspireusafoundation.com/reachout.com  
www.lets.org  
www.mha.org  
www.MIKID.org  
www.NAMI.org  
www.ppai.net  
www.youthmovenational.org

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