Safe kids Healthy kids Happy kids

Do You Practice Good Listening Skills?

Listening is not easy. Parents are not always good listeners. Often, bad listening habits prevent good communication. Parents who listen to their teen have a better chance of solving problems.

Hearing is not listening.

Teens want their parents to understand them, as well as hear them. Listening is hearing and understanding. With practice, parents can learn good listening skills. As a good listener, you:

- Show your teen you are interested. Stop what you are doing. Make eye contact.
- Are patient. Teens may have trouble expressing what they really mean. They need time to find the right words. It may be difficult for them to share their thoughts and problems.
- Tune out your own thoughts and reactions. Ask yourself, what do his words mean?
- Observe non-verbal messages. What do your teen's eyes and facial expressions tell you? Are her shoulders slumped? Does she talk with energy?
- Encourage your teen to talk. Nod your head. Make comments such as, "That's interesting", "Wow", or "I'm listening". Limit your input.



- 10% of communication is the spoken word.
- 40% of communication is the tone of voice.
- 50% of communication is body language.

 Thank your teen for sharing. Give them a hug or a pat on the back. Say, "I'm glad you told me," or "I'm glad we could talk."

Bad habits can block good communication. You need to improve if you:

- Always interrupt.
- Ask too many questions and focus on nonimportant details.
- Finish your teen's thoughts before he can state them.
- Fail to concentrate and forget what your teen says.
- Label your teen or call him names "Only someone stupid would do that."
- Always jump in with your own problems

 "You think that's bad, listen to what happened to me."
- Criticize, judge and blame. When teens make mistakes, they need loving parents to help them problem-solve.
- Nag your teen. "I've told you ten times to take out the garbage."
- Send unclear messages. For example, "Be home for dinner", is not as clear as, "Dinner is at 7 p.m. Do not be late."

As you practice good listening skills, you also model these skills. Your teen will learn to be a good listener, just like you.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital



