

How well do we listen to our children?

Do we as parents take the time to stop and really listen to our children? And I don't mean while you are making supper, picking up around the house or while watching TV. I mean truly listening - A time when they have our whole undivided attention. We often have excuses to not take the time in this busy world and then we wonder why sometimes our child stops talking to us as they get older.

Ask yourself when my child tries to talk to me:

- ✓ Do I already have judgment on my child when he/she speaks or even before they are going to speak?
- ✓ Am I always thinking about what I am going to say next?
- ✓ Am I only listening for facts and not the underlying reason of what my child is saying?
- ✓ Am I able to get past their slang or jargon?
- ✓ Am I thinking about my own issues while pretending to listen to them?
- ✓ Do I often think about what I can debate on with what they are telling to me?
- ✓ Do I often interrupt while they are talking?

It is easy to get caught up in doing some of these at one time or another but it is not a habit that we want to keep.

Being a good listener is not easy and takes practice. There are some people that it does come more naturally for than it does for others. It is important for us as parents to recognize this is a strength that we would like to improve on in order to have a better relationship with our child.

We can improve our own listening by identifying our own habits and making an effort to change them. Here are some tips that can help us to be better listeners:

- ✓ Force yourself to PAY ATTENTION
- ✓ Be open minded
- ✓ Try to see the world as they do
- ✓ Delay our judgment
- ✓ Listen for facts, feelings principles, concepts, values, tones and main ideas
- ✓ Listen to the Whole Message even if it is unpleasant or unwelcome.
- ✓ Do less talking
- ✓ Create a positive environment
- ✓ Be aware of words or manners of speech which may cause a negative reaction in you
- ✓ Be calm
- ✓ Put aside your own thoughts and opinions.
- ✓ Focus on your child and use nonverbal cues such eye contact, head nods, and smiles so that they know they have been heard.
- ✓ Hear before evaluating.
- ✓ Seek to understand the child rather than giving advice or judging.
- ✓ Discover exactly what they have in mind. Often our perception is different from what they are trying to say.
- ✓ Help them find words that will help them express themselves to you.

It is important to take the time to allow our children to be heard. This makes them feel loved, accepted and helps the develop self-worth and respect for themselves as well as others.

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