WAY TO GO!
FAMILY LEARNING JOURNAL™
FAMILY ACTIVITY
#18

The Gift of Listening*

Some kids are chatterboxes. Others are shy and don't say much at all. And plenty of kids are in-between. Letting or encouraging a child to talk is a simple and profound gift. Listening with total attentiveness gives them the message, 'I see you. I value you. You are important to me.' For the child, talking to someone who is truly listening builds self-esteem and self-knowledge. They get the opportunity to use words they might not usually use, and a chance to express ideas or concerns they may tend to hide. ***Real listening is a gift*** to everyone!

When you are really listening, you are totally present with your child—with love in your eyes and your voice.

Here's a way to give the gift of listening:

1) At least once a week, set aside about 10 minutes to really listen to each child. Plan on being ***100% there***—no peeking at your watch or glancing at the TV. It is best if this time is when no one else is around. If that can't be arranged, then do it whenever you can, like before bed-time.

2) If your child needs urging to open up, you can say, "I'd like to listen for a bit to whatever you want to tell me." Or, "Tell me what you've been thinking about lately." Or, "I'd love to hear how you're feeling these days."

3) Just give the child time to talk. It's fine to make ***encouraging sounds*** – "Hum," "That's interesting," "Wow," but don't start answering or commenting on what they say. Be willing to wait while they gather their thoughts. There may be silences. If your child doesn't talk, don't worry about that. Just give the same opportunity the next week. The point of this activity is to let your child know you value what he or she says and thinks. You may be delighted to learn how thoughtful your child is.

4) When this listening time is up, give your child a hug and say something like, "I love hearing what you think about things." Or, "Thanks for telling me about all that." Again, you don't need to give your opinion on anything that was said. Just know that your full, loving attention is one of the best gifts you can ever give.

"When I was growing up, my dad really listened to me. He made me feel like I was wise and had valuable ideas. He would say, 'You always have a good way of figuring things out!' or 'Yea, that's a good point.' I listened to him and then he listened to me and we shared. Thank you, Dad."

— Grandma Anna

**The Gift of Listening* supports the English-Language Arts Content Standards related to speaking and listening.

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