

Listen Before You Talk!

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”
—Stephen R. Covey

WHY IS LISTENING ESSENTIAL TO A FAMILY?

List as many words as you can in 30 seconds related to the word “family.” The goal is for everyone in your family to list as many of the same words as possible. You get one point for each word every member of your family has in common, but you can’t discuss the word or share your answers until time is up. If there are family members who can’t write, have them team up with a parent.

STEPS

1. I listen to others without interrupting.
2. I listen to other people’s ideas and feelings.
3. I look other people in the eye when listening and talking.
4. I try to see things from other people’s viewpoint.

COMMON LANGUAGE

Point of view
Attitude
Reflective listening

How many points did you get? Why do you think you got the score you did? Repeat the activity using the word “love.”

- How many points did you get this round?
- Was your score higher?
- Why is it difficult to get a high score?

We all see the world differently. The problem is, we think we see things the same way others do. Communication is important to achieve understanding because no two people see, think, or experience the world the same way. Therefore, there is a great need, especially in families, to seek first to understand and talk second so we understand one another’s point of view.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING AND “LISTEN FIRST, TALK SECOND”

Family Activity: When someone is speaking, the listener can use reflective listening to let the speaker know they are really listening to what is being said. Here are some simple examples of reflective listening:

Speaker: “I love you.”

Listener: “You seem to feel love about me.”

Yes, that is a very simplified example; however, reflective listening can be that easy! Now, take turns making statements and practicing reflective listening. Here are a few more examples to help you get started:

Speaker: “I don’t want to talk about it. It seems like the only thing we do around here is argue.”

Listener: “You seem to feel _____ about _____.
(feeling) (subject)”

Speaker: “I don’t want to play with her. She is mean to me.”

Listener: “You seem to feel _____ about _____.
(feeling) (subject)”

In some situations, discerning a feeling and a subject may be more complicated. Here are some simple phrases and questions you can use to keep the door open for understanding:

- Tell me more about that.
- Can you give me an example?
- You’re saying...
- I am hearing that... Is that what you are telling me?
- How does that make you feel?