



6 Ways to Be a Better Listener at Home

Improve communication with your kids

In the midst of busy family life, it can be easy to overlook one of a parent's most effective tools for communicating respect to our children: the art of listening well. Here are a few suggestions that you can put to work immediately:

1. **Look your children in the eye when they are talking to you.** Put down the newspaper or put aside the housework for a moment. Stop, look, and listen.
2. **Repeat without judgment what they've said.** This shows you're listening to hear and not to defend or rebut.
3. **Hold your tongue.** If you want your children to talk to you, you need to listen, listen, listen! We always want to put our two cents in, to guide them, correct them, or to offer advice. But, speaking too soon can shut off communication rather than furthers it.
4. **Ask open-ended questions (without judgment).** Ask to learn more, not to subtly steer their thinking. They'll spot that trick a mile away!
5. **Share your experience and values rather than just your advice.** When it comes time to respond, be open and tell what experience you've had with the issue at hand. Then share the values that guide your actions. Kids love to learn more about their parents' experience and beliefs—as long as it's not a lecture disguised as conversation.
6. **Pray.** This last tip should come first. Remember to say a quick prayer when first approached by your child. Pray for the ability to listen with an open heart and to be an instrument of grace.