

LISTENING POINTERS

Listening is not a passive sport. The following pointers show how to focus your attention so you can listen to people in a way that will help them listen to you.

- Make eye contact, nods, and listening noises: “Uh huh.”
- Ask questions to clarify anything you do not understand: “What do you mean by . . . ?”
- Show you understand by rephrasing, labeling, and validating feelings:
“What do you mean by . . . ? Are you saying . . . ?”
“You must feel . . . You seem . . .”
“It makes sense that you feel . . . It must be hard when . . .”
- Check your accuracy by asking for a percentage rating of what you understood: “What percentage of your comment did I understand?”
- Rephrase, relabel, or revalidate any points or emotions that you missed.
- Identify any requests that lie behind people’s emotions after thoroughly demonstrating that you understand their feelings: “Does it help that I understand? Would you like a hug?”
- Interrupt long monologues with rephrases and validations: This may shorten lectures.
- Use a stopwatch: If one person tries to get too many points across, set a limit on how much time each person has to state his or her case before the other person has a chance to express concerns.
- Welcome tears: They are a sign that you are doing an excellent job of listening by drawing out deep levels of pain. Offer physical support with a pat or a shoulder on which to cry.
- Do not offer solutions, even if the other person asks for them. Find out what the person has thought about doing or what he or she wants to do first.
- Do not disagree without thoroughly understanding how the other person reached his or her conclusions.
- Do not agree just to pacify the person. You do not have to agree to understand!
- When you don’t have the attention to listen, ask for time out. Set a specific time to listen later, when you can be more attentive.

RECOMMENDED READING

Between Parent and Child by Haim Ginott (Avon Books, 1969).

Between Parent and Teenager by Haim Ginott (Avon Books, 1971).

Bringing Up Parents by Alex J. Packer (Free Spirit Publishing, 1992).

Getting the Love You Want by Harville Hendrix (Henry Holt, 1988) www.imagotherapy.com

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (Avon Books, 1980).

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey (Simon & Schuster, 1989).