



PricelessSM
Parenting

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Priceless Parenting Newsletter March 2009

Dear Parents,

Good listening is essential for building strong relationships with our children. It is also deceptively simple sounding. How hard can it possibly be to listen well? Plenty hard. Stopping what we're doing to really look at our children and listen to what they are saying takes effort. However, the reward is children who feel we truly understand them because we've listened.

Avoiding Hearing "You're not listening!"

Listening is one of those skills that really doesn't seem like it's all that difficult. Why then do so many children report that their parents don't listen to them?

Maybe it's because there are a lot of ways for parents to unintentionally stop conversations with their kids. For example, if your child is telling you about being nervous for an upcoming test, these types of responses will probably leave your child feeling unheard:

- **Analyzing:** "You always worry about tests and then end up doing great."
- **Criticizing:** "If you would have been studying every night for the last week like I suggested, you wouldn't need to be nervous now."
- **Reassuring:** "You've studied enough. I'm sure you'll do great on the test."
- **Giving advice:** "If you study an hour right before going to bed, you'll probably remember more for the test tomorrow."

These types of responses are considered roadblocks to conversation because they tend to shutdown communication. It is extremely easy to accidentally use these roadblocks when talking to children.

If you want your children to feel heard, a better approach is to

- **Stop** what you are doing
- **Look** at your child
- Listen carefully - **pay attention** to the body language
- When your child is done speaking, **summarize** what you heard

When you summarize what you heard, you are giving your child the opportunity to clarify or correct your understanding of what was said.

Good listening takes time, patience and attention. You can't fully listen while also watching TV or working on the computer. Communication involves not only words but also body language, eye contact and tone of voice. So in order to understand your child's message, you need to both hear the words and watch how they are said.

The importance of listening was clearly demonstrated to me during a company

Presentations

[Parent presentations](#) are now being scheduled for fall 2009 for PTAs and schools in the Seattle area. If you'd like to schedule a presentation, [email us](#) or call 425-770-1629.

Topics include:

Taking the Stress Out of Parenting and Building Great Relationships with Your Children

Parenting the Digital Child: Teaching Responsibility in a Connected World

"Why Can't You Behave?" Ideas for Positively Handling Young Children's Misbehavior

On the Road to Independence: Guiding Teens to Becoming Responsible Adults

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gathering at Wilson Learning where I worked over 20 years ago. We were divided into small groups and one of the exercises was to have each person in the group spend five minutes talking about whatever they wanted. The rest of the group needed to listen carefully. No interrupting, no questions, no comments. What surprised me was how many people ended up in tears during their five minutes of talking. It seemed that having a small group of people actually listening for five minutes was a rare and special occasion.

If listening for five minutes has that large an impact on adults, just think what it can do for your relationship with your children!

This Month's Challenge: Really Listening

Pick out a day where you will intentionally focus on really listening to your children. When your children speak to you, try to pause whatever you are doing, look at them and listen to them carefully.

If your children are typically quiet, you might open up a conversation when they come home from school by saying "Tell me about your day." If they don't have much to say, tell them about your day and that will likely get them talking about what happened to them too!

Last Month's Challenge: Avoiding Commands

Last month you were challenged to monitor the commands and orders you give your children. When did you find yourself giving the most orders? Were you able to replace those orders with telling your kids what you were going to do instead of telling them what they had to do?

May you enjoy listening and learning from your children this month!

Warm Regards,

Kathy Slattengren

P.S. I hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Please do me a favor and forward this to a friend who might enjoy reading it.

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