LISTEN AND LEARN

Why learn to listen?

Listening is one of the most important parts of communicating. There is more to listening than just being quiet. When you really listen, you hear and understand what the other person has said. You learn what family members think and feel, and you understand how they see an issue.

What do we need?

a small ball

How long will it take?

about 30 minutes

What do we do?

Family members agree on the following ground rules for this activity:

• listening to what everyone has to say
• taking turns when it’s time to respond
• not using put-downs
• not evaluating or giving advice

Choose a family member to lead this activity. The leader starts by talking about behaviors that help people share their ideas and feelings. Examples are:

• saying “mm-hmm,” “I see,” or “Oh” as the person is talking
• nodding your head
• looking the speaker in the eye
• asking a question or making comments
• summing up what you’ve heard the person say: “Sounds like you’re angry”

The leader continues by talking about behaviors that keep people from sharing their ideas and feelings. Examples are:

• interrupting
• looking away from the person who is talking
• doing something else while you are “listening”

BUILDING FAMILY STRENGTHS
- yawning or looking at the clock
- moving away from the person who is talking
- giving unwanted advice

The leader then says, "One really important part of listening is taking turns. It's easier to listen when we know we'll have a turn to speak. We're going to use a ball to help us take turns. Only the person holding the ball may speak. If you would like to speak, please raise your hand. The speaker will pass the ball to you, and then you may speak."

Here are some suggested topics of conversation:

- What is the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you?
- Talk about something that has happened to your family that was funny or pleasant.
- Talk about a trip you have taken or one you would like to take.
- Talk about something that happened at work or school.

Option. It might be fun to have a discussion at the dinner table, using a salt shaker instead of the ball.


What happened? ▼ How did it feel only being able to speak when you had the ball?

What did you learn? ▼ What did you learn about the members of your family that you didn't know before?

Why was this activity important? ▼ When you listened well, were you calmer or less anxious?

What's next? ▼ How can you apply what you learned to communicating with your friends?