



Actively Listening to your Adolescent

Quality communication is a critical part of successful parenting, and active listening is an important component of positive and productive communication with your adolescent. Active listening is making a conscious effort to hear the words your adolescent is saying and to understand the entire message he or she is conveying.

There are four key steps to being a successful active listener.



Step 1: Be present and limit distractions



Showing your adolescent that he or she has your undivided attention helps your child understand that how he or she feels and what he or she is saying is important to you. Be sure to concentrate on what is being said.

By including nonverbal gestures that show you're listening, like nodding or smiling, your adolescent may feel more willing to share with you and be open with you (Vitalaki & Katsarou, 2021).



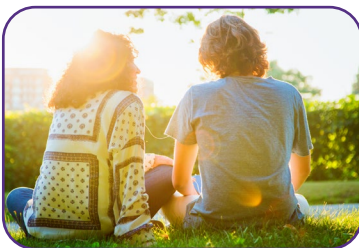
Step 2: Listen with intent

While your adolescent is speaking, concentrate on his or her words, and do not think about your response. If you are formulating your reply, your attention will be distracted, and you may miss key points.

Wait until your adolescent has finished speaking, or better yet, ask your child if he or she is finished speaking before you respond.



Step 3: Pause and take a breath...



When listening to your adolescent, do not make judgments on the words or actions, and make a point to hear the whole story. It is important for your child to feel that his or her thoughts and feelings are valid and deserve consideration.



Step 4: Paraphrase what was said



When talking with your adolescent, repeat what he or she said by using statements like, “I hear you saying...” and “It sounds like you feel...” followed by “Does that sound right?”

Paraphrasing shows your adolescent that you understand or don’t understand what he or she said, which will allow your child to clarify points for you.



Actively listening to your adolescent can help create a safe and trusting communication environment in which your child feels heard and understood. As a result of the trust that is built, you may be better able to prevent or diffuse conflict and understand your child’s needs, so you can find solutions together.

Reference

Vitalaki, E., & Katsarou, E. (2021). Active listening: A model for teachers and parents to actively listen and act upon children’s concerns in terms of their perceptions of quality of life. In L. Valanidou, M. Neophytou, M. Anatasou, & M. Koutselini (Eds.), *Children’s life quality: Participation, recreation, and play* (pp. 74-104). Center for Social Innovation.

Additional resources, skills, and strategies for parents are available at no cost through the online Thrive Initiative programming. Visit the Thrive website <https://thrive.psu.edu>, and sign up today!