

LISTENING

Does it feel like the communication channel between you and your adolescent is blocked? Unblocking can begin by deciding to focus on what your adolescent is saying before you try to get your own point of view across. This means becoming a better listener.

Here are three steps to improve your listening skills.

1. Get into the here and now: This means really paying attention and not thinking about something else when your adolescent is talking to you. Why is this important? Think about what it feels like when you are talking to someone and they keep watching the TV or reading the paper. Contrast that with how it feels to have someone's undivided interest and attention.
2. Try to understand: Work at concentrating on what your adolescent is saying rather than thinking about what you are going to say next. How is their point of view valid? What good intentions might lie behind what they are saying?
3. Show that you are trying to understand: Summarise your adolescent's main points and pinpoint how they might be feeling (e.g., "You're feeling angry because I didn't talk to you before making plans for this weekend. I can understand that."). Try to avoid making judgements in your summary (e.g., "You want to stay out to midnight", instead of, "You want to stay out very late."), and then invite them to tell you more about what they are thinking and feeling.



Remind yourself that listening is not the same thing as agreeing. It is possible to understand another person's point of view without agreeing with it.

Good listening not only helps avoid conflict caused by misunderstandings; it's the best way to show your adolescent that you are genuinely interested and that you really care.

Prepared by the Parenting Research Centre

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