



## Quick Tips: Listening Through the Years

All parenting adults sometimes “tune out” their kids. That’s normal, and it’s okay once in a while. But it is important for young people to know that their parents really hear and care about what they have to say—almost always, and especially when they are in need. Try these listening tips through the years.

### Ages Birth-2

- Do your best to respond to babies’ cries, giggles, body language, and other signals. See if you can start to notice differences between hunger cries and tired cries, excited giggles and contented giggles, fear facial expressions and anger facial expressions.

### Ages 3-5

- Set time aside each day, even a few minutes, to focus completely on your children. Let them take the lead on what you do, whether it’s to snuggle, talk, play, sing, or something else.
- Read and tell your children stories about lots of different kinds of people and families.

### Ages 6-9

- Start a “thought sharing” tradition. At a meal, bedtime, or another time when there are few distractions, get in the habit of sharing one thing about your day, something interesting you each thought of, a hope or a dream, or another open-ended topic.
- When you need time to concentrate, or for private or serious conversation with someone else, tell your children how long it will take and what you expect from them during that time. When you are finished, let them know they can once again have your attention.

### Ages 10-14

- Use “active listening” with your children: Ask good questions, paraphrase what they say to make sure you understand, and show that you empathize with what they are saying.
- Practice “hearing” on more than one level: Listen to the words your kids are saying, but also tune in to what they are saying with their tone of voice and body language.

### Ages 15-18

- Let your teenager take the lead sometimes in conversation by opening the door and seeing if they step in. For example: Instead of always asking how school was, greet your kids regularly with reflections on your own day, like, “Hey, it’s good to see you, something exciting happened that I’ve been wanting to tell you,” or “Wow, I’m tired this evening, but it’s good to be home.”
- Spend time with your teenagers on a regular basis doing things you both enjoy. Often, teenagers will prefer talking while doing some other activity over sitting down and having a face-to-face conversation with their parents.