

What is Active Listening?

It takes a lot of energy to listen well. Active listening is a communication technique that helps you understand and connect with your child. It is especially useful if he/she is upset and needs to feel supported. Active listening shows your child you value and care for him/her. It also puts you in a better position to solve problems because you'll have a better understanding of your child's feelings and how they are related to his/her behavior.



How to Act:

(Non-verbal)

- Put away all distractions (cell phones, TV, cooking/cleaning, etc.)
- Face your child
- Position yourself at eye level with your child
- Make eye contact
- Have gentle, comfortable posture
- Have a warm facial expression

What to Say:

(Verbal)

- Simple acknowledgment (nod, say "ok")
- Paraphrasing (restate what you heard your child say, ask for confirmation)
- Be curious and acknowledge your child's feelings ("*It looks like you're feeling sad because...*")
- Ask for more information ("*Would you like to talk about it?*")
- Ask for clarification ("*I'm not sure I understand. Are you saying that...?*")

Some Tips:

- Take steps to calm down first so that you can listen to your child
- Remember that your child can learn to regulate emotions with your support and modeling
- Identify feeling words to help your child name their feelings
- Watch for your child's non-verbal communication (facial expressions, folded arms, etc.)
- Remember, sometimes listening is enough to help your child calm down and gain confidence
- Identify the strengths in your child's behavior (staying calm, deep breathing)