



Two ears, one mouth

The Foundations Newsletter

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Communication

You're trying to tell someone something, but it's just not working. She might as well have gray skin, a huge head, big black eyeballs, and come from Mars for all the luck you're having. Here's the deal: other people aren't aliens, but they are different. **Listen first—until they feel completely understood—then try to explain your point of view.** The fact is you might be so busy talking that you've had no time to listen. Other people see things different ways because they're different, and different things are important to them. As a Native American proverb says, "Listen, or your tongue will make you deaf." You'll be surprised at what you learn—and at how incredible your communication skills will become.

We've all seen the sitcoms where miscommunication is the root of a problem: friends who miss meeting due to misinformation, a couple who breaks up over inaccurate gossip, or co-workers who don't get along because of rumors. The sitcoms are usually funny, but in real life, problems based on miscommunication are rarely funny and rarely resolved in half an hour. Help your teen learn to avoid these problems with the tips below.

- **Listen to your teen.** Don't listen and jump to conclusions, give advice, or reminisce about your past when your teen has something to share; instead, just listen and try to understand. This type of listening isn't always easy, but modeling it is the best way to teach your child good communication skills, and once your teen feels understood he or she will be more likely to open up and treat your opinions with respect.
- **Listen with more than your ears.** Model active listening for your teen. Show him or her how to listen with his or her eyes, ears, and heart. Remember that most people communicate more through body language—gestures, tone of voice, and posture—than through words.
- **Understand that your teen views things differently...**and help your teen understand that you see things differently too. Ask your teen what would happen if he or she put on someone's glasses. Ask: would you be able to see clearly? Point out that the difference in what he or she would see with someone else's glasses represents the different ways people see things in life. Everyone views things a bit differently and we need to try and see things through someone else's glasses in order to understand them. Problems in life are not always a question of right and wrong, but a case of different ways of viewing the world.

"A child becomes an adult when he realizes that he has a right not only to be right but also to be wrong." –Thomas S. Szasz

