

# EIGHT STEPS FOR BETTER LISTENING

- **Face your child squarely.** This says that you are available to your child.
  - **Adopt an open posture.** Crossed arms and legs say, "I'm not interested." An open posture shows your child that you are open to him and what he has to say.
  - **Put yourself on your child's level.** Kneel, squat down, lay across his bed, lean toward him. This communicates "I want to know more about you."
  - **Maintain good eye contact.** Have you ever talked to someone whose eyes seem to be looking at everything in the room but you? How did that make you feel? That is not something you want your kids to experience with you.
  - **Stay relaxed.** If you fidget nervously as your daughter is talking, she'll think you'd rather be somewhere else. That's counterproductive.
  - **Watch your child.** Learn to read her nonverbal behavior: posture, body movements, and gestures. Notice frowns, smiles, and raised eyebrows. Listen to voice quality and pitch, emphasis, pauses, and inflections. The way your child says something can tell you more than what she is actually saying.
  - **Actively give your child nonverbal feedback.** Nod. Smile. Raise your eyebrows. Look surprised. These small signals mean more than you realize. They'll encourage your child to open up even more and let you into his life.
  - **The last step to listening is speaking.** But, before you give your response, restate in your own words what he has told you. That proves that you were listening and it gives the child the opportunity to say "Yes, that's it exactly" or "No, what I really mean is this . . . "
- Remember, the goal of communication is understanding.

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