

Social Work Matters



Fostering the connection between home, community, and school.

FEBRUARY 2022

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HABIT 5: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

by Gayla Konanz, LCSW

Listening may be one of the most difficult things to do in a relationship. There are many distractions in everyday life: kids who want and need our attention, stress and demands of work, our significant other, TV, pets, our phones dinging and social media. If we try to “listen” with all this noise around us, we will miss out on important moments with the ones we love.

I have been a School Social Worker for the past 12 years and students, from the ages of 9 to 18, tell me they feel invisible in their homes. This stems from feeling as if they are not heard, nor understood.

It is a human reaction to want to give our opinions and advice, even when it is not asked for. Humans also like to compare their experiences with others. This is proven when we say, “When I was a kid...”.



But, the person we are talking with truly wants to know that we have heard what they are saying and understand their message. To truly seek first to understand, we must:

- ***Stay focused when someone is sharing with us***
- ***Respond back to what you have heard them say***
- ***Decide the next step: does the person just need to vent; do they need to problem solve; do they want your advice?***
- ***Ask for the same respect back when you are speaking***

When we show that we are interested and care about those around us, relationships will be stronger. And by modeling empathetic listening, we too will be understood.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

PEANUTS CLASSICS By Charles M. Schulz



Resources

Please contact your school's social worker if you are interested in receiving weekend food packs, clothing, and/or school supplies. Your school social worker is able to provide referrals to a community resources if a need arises.