

# Situation

*The last time the Parent went shopping with his/her family they entered a drawing for a new bike. The Parent just received a letter in the mail announcing his/her family is the lucky winner and they can come to the store next Saturday to pick up the bike. The Parent is very pleased that his/her youngest child will now have the kind of bike she's been wanting. The Parent sees the Neighbor and goes over to share the good news. The Neighbor is a poor listener. As the Parent goes on in an excited way, instead of using listening skills, the Neighbor looks away in a bored manner, yawns, interrupts, and so on.*

# Listening Skills

One of the keys to good family communication is the ability to listen well. The *Skills for Growing* program gives students the tools to make good listeners. Try using these guidelines at home.

1. Give the speaker your attention. *This lets the speaker know that you think what he or she is saying is important.*
  - Stop what you are doing and look at the speaker.
  - Pay attention without fidgeting, looking at your watch, or looking away.
2. Encourage the speaker to tell you more. *This lets the speaker know that you are listening and want to know more.*
  - Ask open-ended questions about what the speaker has said. Open-ended questions might include:
    - “Can you tell me more about that?”
    - “How did you feel about that?”
    - “What do you think would happen if you did that?”
    - “What help do you need?”
    - “What do you like about that?”
  - Rephrase or summarize what the speaker has said. For example:
    - “It sounds as if you feel frustrated because no one would listen to your side of the story.”
    - “It seems as if you wanted to share your ideas, and other people were interrupting you.”
    - “I can understand how thrilled you were to be chosen for that part in the play.”
  - Make comments that reflect your concern or interest in a topic, such as:
    - “I’d like to know more about that.”
    - “How exciting!”
    - “I wish I’d tried that.”
3. Show you are interested by your actions. *Body language can let the speaker know you are listening.*
  - Use gestures and postures that tell the speaker you are interested in what he or she is saying.
  - Nodding and leaning forward are two ways to let a speaker know you are listening.