

Listening with Empathy

Sometimes when we talk to people, they do not really “hear” what we are saying. The same thing often happens when other people are talking to us. Practicing empathy means understanding other people’s feelings, thoughts, and motives. This does not mean that we have to agree with them; we just need to understand their perspective. Employing empathic listening, which involves using listening to learn more about another person’s point of view, will help your teen better understand another person’s perspective. That, in turn, improves communication, reduces conflict, and builds relationships.

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Here is a list of ways to listen with empathy:

- **REALIZE** that the other person has different but valid experiences, feelings, values, needs, and motivations.
- **TRY** to put aside stereotypes and preconceptions.
- **ASK** for information and listen and watch for feelings.
- **CHECK** your understanding by paraphrasing—putting into your own words—what you think you heard.
- **AVOID** arguing, giving advice, or criticizing.

Building Your Teen’s Social and Emotional Competence

Relationship skills is a social and emotional learning competency that helps teens establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. These activities help teens build essential communication skills.

Investigate the Media!

Ask your teen to watch an interview on a television news program and observe how the guests and the host use listening skills. Have your teen determine if empathic listening skills are used.

Teach It!

Have your teen write a mini lesson teaching younger children about listening skills. Encourage your teen to discuss how empathic listening helps understand someone else’s perspective.

Many teens are experiencing feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear due to the onset of COVID-19. They need a chance to share their thoughts and feelings and ask questions. Make sure you are accurately informed and ready to educate your teen knowing the information is evolving all the time. Get information from: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

