

# Listening to Your Child/ Escucha a su hijo

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Do you know that listening to your children is as important as talking to them? Every child has special feelings and emotions, joys and sadness, hopes and fears, questions and confusions. When you fully listen to your children, you will be able to help them understand and cope with these feelings, answer their questions, and reduce their confusion. Most importantly, you will be showing you care about and respect them. You will also learn to understand how your children think and learn.

Even young children use a kind of language.

They will extend their arms when they want to be held, or turn their heads away when they are tired of watching something. Their different sounds and cries will let you know when they are happy, hungry, tired, sleepy, or wet. Listen and watch carefully so you can understand and respond to your child's special language. When you truly listen to your child, you are showing them that what they have to say is important to you. In this way, you are helping to build their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Unfortunately, some parents feel that listening to their children is not important. These parents spend most of their time judging, advising, directing, and scolding, but not listening. In doing so, they deprive their children of some very special growth opportunities.

Listening may not be easy, especially for busy parents. It takes a little time, attention, and patience. It means not interrupting your child, jumping to conclusions, or giving instant advice. It may mean turning off the TV, radio, or mobile devices and finding a quiet place to talk. But listening has special rewards. Not only will you get to know each other better, you may find that your child has also learned how to listen to you!

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## TIPS FOR LISTENING

- **Be available.** Make time in your schedule to talk and give your child your undivided attention without distractions. It is helpful to get down to their level by sitting with them and looking at them while you talk.
- **Be a good listener.** Reflect or repeat back what your child has said to ensure you are understanding what they are trying to say.
- **Show empathy.** Tune in to their feelings to let them know you understand. Be careful not to tell children what they feeling or minimize their feelings by telling them their feelings are silly or wrong.
- **Be a good role model.** Children learn by example, so be sure to use words and tones in your voice that you want to encourage your child to use.

¿Sabía Ud. que el escuchar a su hijo es tan importante como hablarle? Cada criatura tiene sentimientos, emociones, alegrías, tristezas, esperanzas, temores, dudas y confusiones especiales. Al escuchar a su hijo, Ud. puede ayudarle a comprender y controlar estos sentimientos. Si lo escucha podrá aclarar sus dudas y disminuir su confusión, mostrarle su respeto y cariño y aprender a comprender cómo su hijo percibe la realidad.

Desde su más tierna edad los bebés tratan de comunicarse. Extienden los brazos cuando quieren que los alcen, vuelven la cabeza cuando se cansan de mirar algo, gritan y lloran cuando tienen hambre, están cansados, mojados o felices. Escuche y observe bien a su hijo para captar bien su mensaje y responder eficazmente. Si Ud. escucha bien a su hijo, le demuestra que su mensaje es importante para Ud., y así le ayuda a adquirir confianza en sí mismo y autoestima.

Lamentablemente algunos padres creen que no es importante escuchar a sus hijos, que no aprenden nada escuchándolos y que los niños no aprenden nada hablando. Estos padres se pasan la mayor parte del tiempo juzgando, aconsejando, orientando y retando, pero no escuchando. Así privan a sus hijos de buenas oportunidades para aprender más.

El escuchar es un arte, y más para los padres ocupados. Lleva tiempo, atención y paciencia. Significa no interrumpir a la criatura, sacar conclusiones ni dar consejos antes de tiempo. También puede significar apagar la televisión, la radio, o los aparatos móviles y buscar un lugar tranquilo para conversar. Pero el escuchar atentamente tiene su recompensa especial para padres e hijos. No solo aprenderán a conocerse mejor, sino que sabrán escucharse con mutuo respeto.

## CONSEJOS PARA ESCUCHAR

- **Este disponible.** Dedique tiempo de su horario para hablar y brinde a su hijo toda su atención sin distracciones. Es útil bajar a su nivel, sentándose con él y mirándolo mientras habla.
- **Sea un buen oyente.** Reflexione o repita lo que ha dicho su hijo para asegurarse de que comprende lo que intenta decir.
- **Muestre empatía.** Sintone sus sentimientos con los de su hijo para hacerle saber que entiende. Tenga cuidado de no decirle al niño lo que siente es tonto o minimizar sus sentimientos diciéndole que son incorrectos.
- **Sea un buen modelo a seguir.** Los niños aprenden con el ejemplo, así que asegúrese de usar palabras y tonos en su voz que alienten a su hijo a usarlas también.

*Adapted from a publication of the Cooperative Extension Service, University of California, Berkeley, by Diana S. Del Campo, Extension Child Development and Family Life Specialist.*

*Additional information from publications by the American Academy of Pediatrics and CDC.*



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