

HOW TO REALLY LISTEN TO YOUR KIDS

Being a good listener improves relationships, builds trust, and allows others to know that their feelings—whatever they are—are respected and truly heard. One effective way to achieve this is through a method called reflective listening. When you use this technique with your kids, you are letting them know that you really understand, or at least are trying to understand. You will be looking at something from your children's point of view, and giving them "permission" to have whatever feelings they have.

How does reflective listening work?

- First, look at your child with your full attention. You can nod or use an encouraging sound like um-hmm, but don't interrupt.
- Try to understand what is behind the words your child is saying.
- Then calmly repeat or rephrase your child's words to be sure you have understood correctly; for example, you could start with "So what I hear you saying is ..."

Here are some statements that *don't* help:

- "You shouldn't feel that way."
- "It's not nice to say that."
- "What's wrong with you?"

 What is the best way to handle the following situations? Circle the preferable response:

It's your second day home, and your son is acting out. When you ask him what's going on, he snaps, "You're not my boss!"

Would you say?

- a. "Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!"
- b. "Yes, I am!"
- c. "It sounds like you're having a bad day. Tell me about what's been going on."
- d. "This must be hard for you. Want to talk about it?"

Correct answer: c or d

Your daughter is crying a lot without any obvious reason. When you ask why, she says, "I don't know!"

Would you say?

- a. "There's nothing so terrible happening."
- b. "I know how hard this is for you. How does it make you feel?"
- c. "Sometimes people don't know why they're crying and that can feel scary. Do you feel scared?"
- d. "Snap out of it!"

Correct answer: b or c