

# LISTENING POINTERS

Listening is not a passive sport. The following pointers show how to focus your attention so you can listen to people in a way that will help them listen to you.

- Make eye contact, nods, and listening noises: “Uh huh.”
- Ask questions to clarify anything you do not understand: “What do you mean by . . . ?”
- Show you understand by rephrasing, labeling, and validating feelings:  
“What do you mean by . . . ? Are you saying . . . ?”  
“You must feel . . . You seem . . .”  
“It makes sense that you feel . . . It must be hard when . . .”
- Check your accuracy by asking for a percentage rating of what you understood: “What percentage of your comment did I understand?”
- Rephrase, relabel, or revalidate any points or emotions that you missed.
- Identify any requests that lie behind people’s emotions after thoroughly demonstrating that you understand their feelings: “Does it help that I understand? Would you like a hug?”
- Interrupt long monologues with rephrases and validations: This may shorten lectures.
- Use a stopwatch: If one person tries to get too many points across, set a limit on how much time each person has to state his or her case before the other person has a chance to express concerns.
- Welcome tears: They are a sign that you are doing an excellent job of listening by drawing out deep levels of pain. Offer physical support with a pat or a shoulder on which to cry.
- Do not offer solutions, even if the other person asks for them. Find out what the person has thought about doing or what he or she wants to do first.
- Do not disagree without thoroughly understanding how the other person reached his or her conclusions.
- Do not agree just to pacify the person. You do not have to agree to understand!
- When you don’t have the attention to listen, ask for time out. Set a specific time to listen later, when you can be more attentive.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Between Parent and Child* by Haim Ginott (Avon Books, 1969).

*Between Parent and Teenager* by Haim Ginott (Avon Books, 1971).

*Bringing Up Parents* by Alex J. Packer (Free Spirit Publishing, 1992).

*Getting the Love You Want* by Harville Hendrix (Henry Holt, 1988) [www.imagotherapy.com](http://www.imagotherapy.com)

*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (Avon Books, 1980).

*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey (Simon & Schuster, 1989).