



“More than anything else – more than a trip to Disney World – kids want parents to listen and to respect them.”

Ken Ginsburg, MD, MS Ed, FAAP and MCEC Science Advisory Board Member

Effective listening skills encompass the ability to actively understand the information provided and display interest in the topic. As parents, we can learn how to be effective listeners to be there and support our children through life's challenges.

Tips for Effective Listening

Try to relax during conversations and be attentive to what they are saying, as well as what their body language is conveying. It's important to remember to stay calm and be mindful of your responses. Although we often want to jump in with solutions, don't interrupt them if they bring you their own ideas. Empathize by doing your best to feel what your child is feeling. Remember to give regular feedback with brief responses or even nodding your head.

Dos of Effective Listening

Be a sounding board, listening until they have finished speaking. Allow their ideas to 'bounce off' you. You'll want to listen more than talk, allowing your child to work through their feelings. You can help by asking open-ended questions such as "How did that make you feel...". Assure them that you will respect their privacy. (outside of concerns that may require professional guidance). Teens are especially sensitive to their private information being shared. Remember to be aware of your own body language. Undivided attention and a calm demeanor (deep breaths might help) will show you are ready to listen.

Don'ts of Effective Listening

Although we may want to give them answers, do your best to avoid solving your child's problem. You can indirectly convey that you don't feel they are capable. Also, don't tell them how they should feel. Part of raising an emotionally intelligent child is to guide them into describing their own feelings. Don't let your 'parent alarm' affect your reactions. They can increase the intensity of your child's emotions. Learning to control your reactions sends a message to your children that they can talk with you about anything, and you can handle it.

BOOK

- ***Building Resilience in Children and Teens*** by Kenneth R. Ginsburg

PODCAST

- MCEC Open Communication with Dr. Ginsburg
<https://militarychild.podbean.com/?s=open+communication>

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VIDEOS

- **Video 1:** Everybody Loves Raymond Active Listening:
<https://youtu.be/4VOubVB4CTU>
- **Video 2:** Parenting Tips- Discipline at Different Ages | Parents:
<https://youtu.be/B3iMORZK49U>

HELPFUL LINKS

- Military OneSource: Call 800-342-9647 to speak with a consultant.
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>
- Military Family and Life Counseling Program:
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/military-family-life-counseling-program/>
- Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission (MIC3):
<https://mic3.net/>
- Center for Parent and Teen Communication
<https://parentandteen.com/>
- The Center for Parenting Education.
<https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/healthy-communication/the-skill-of-listening/>

<p>MCEC Resources</p> 	<p>MCEC Website</p> 	<p>MCEC Military Student Consultant – personalized support for military families</p> 
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References available upon request.

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