

PARENTING TIPS

Teach Children How to Listen

A very important skill that children will need as adults is the ability to listen. Listening isn't easy. Most people would rather talk. Children interrupt, yell, and talk over each other, often resulting in misunderstanding. Teaching children how to listen can be a way to help them become less selfish.

One mom told how she taught her children to listen. "I use this technique whenever my boys are in conflict over a toy. I sit them down with the toy on the table and say, 'You can play with the toy as soon as you both agree on a plan.' I encourage them each to share an idea and listen to the other's idea. I teach them about compromise, working together, and sharing, but I let them work it out. Sometimes they'll both be stubborn and I'll have them stay there until they can agree on a plan. I coach them along when they need it. They must always report back to me before continuing to play, providing an opportunity for me to affirm unselfishness and cooperation."

It can be fun to teach a five-year-old how to persuade a two-year-old, or help two eight-year-olds negotiate a solution. Conflict is turned into cooperation through listening.

I (Scott) like to joke with children, "DO you know why God made lips for your mouth but not for your ears?" Or, "Why do you think God gave you one mouth and two ears?" It's because God wants you to quiet your mouth sometimes, so you can listen."

James 1:19 gives children very practical advice. "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." As a parent, you have many opportunities to teach this valuable skill.

This tip comes from the book, Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes, In You and Your Kids by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN