

Parents, Are You Listening or Lecturing to Your Kids? Five Tips to Help You Listen

Seattle, WA – The knowledge that our children are safe, happy and emotionally sound is one of our greatest concerns. If they were being traumatized by something at school or, even worse, the attentions of a predator, we would want to be the first to know.

The only way we can truly be sure that they are all right, or if something is troubling them, is if they feel they can confide in us on a person-to-person basis. But are we actually listening to them as equals, or are we listening to them with condescending ears and, in the process, inadvertently breaking these lines of communication between parent and child – leaving them unwilling to come to us for help?

“Children don’t seem to get as much respect as other members of society,” says Julie Scandora, teacher and author of the book ‘Rules Are Rules.’ “They experience the same emotional obstacles as adults, but this is often overlooked by grown-ups. Parents need to treat children with respect and ensure a trusting relationship.”

Here are five of Julie’s tips to help you communicate more effectively with your children:

1. Listen. It sounds obvious, but if your children don’t think they will be heard, they won’t go to you with the hard questions or problems.
2. Create opportunities for interaction with your kids. Families spend so much time apart these days. Use ‘car time’ – such as the 20-minute drive to school – as a time to communicate with your children.
3. Lead by example. Far too many parents opt for the ‘do as I say not as I do’ method. But this sends mixed messages to children regarding important situations.
4. Respect the child’s intuition. We all have ‘gut feelings,’ and if kids are encouraged to trust theirs, they will be able to heed their intuition in dicey situations when we aren’t around to help.
5. Don’t confuse ‘respect’ with ‘giving in.’ It is important that the parental role is not usurped. Don’t give in to kids just to diffuse a problematic situation. Instead communicate with them and let them know why rules are rules.

By showing our children that we are receptive to what they have to say and that we are willing to talk with them, not just at them, we can help them gain confidence and maturity, but we need to make sure we are practicing what we preach.

“Perhaps we need to start with ourselves, don’t we!” laughs Julie, “But if we give our children the respect we give our peers, they will be better prepared to deal with whatever life throws at them. And when they encounter something for which they are still too young to deal with by themselves, they’ll naturally come to us for advice.”

About the Author

Julie Scandora is a teacher, editor, author and mother of three. She holds a BA from Smith and an MBA from the University of Washington and has taught children in schools and delivered lectures and workshops to adults. Julie has been an editor and assistant publisher for numerous publications. She is also a professional artist specializing in watercolors and is represented in several distinguished galleries. Julie lives in Seattle.

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