



The Institute of Family Living

THE ART OF LISTENING

When you listen, do you try to put yourself in the other person's shoes? Do you avoid interrupting or completing the other person's sentences? Do you tune into the other's feelings, or does your mind wander when others are speaking? Do you try to overcome your own emotional attitudes, responses, and prejudgements? Do you listen to others as you would like to be listened to?

The challenge is to put aside your own concerns and focus on the other person. Have eye-to-eye contact. Give advice only if asked for it and then cautiously. Show acceptance and understanding. Watch and listen for non-verbal communication, i.e., tone of voice, facial expression, and body language, which accounts for 80 to 90 percent of the message.

In families, people are challenged to really hear one another. Good listening can provide insight into problems and difficulties. As they are brought out into the open, anxieties often decrease. Encourage your partner, child, or teenager with comments like "tell me more" or "what solutions do you see?" Avoid comments such as "you shouldn't feel that way." They only create barriers to relationships. It's a real gift to another when we do not take away their freedom and integrity. By carefully listening to others, to God, and to our own inner selves, we can significantly change the quality of our own lives and of those we encounter.

by Dr. Lynne Saul



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