

Family Living Focus
by **Nancy E. Wallace**
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Tips To Tone Up Listening
We know about heart transplants, liver transplants, kidney transplants, but what about an idea transplant. Idea transplant is the simple definition of "communication."

Two persons — one a speaker and the other a listener — transplant an idea from one to the other. Have you ever thought of communication in that manner?

In a typical day, most people send from 300 to 1,000 verbal messages. That's a lot of speaking and listening. The biggest problem in communicating is that most people spend more time speaking than listening. In William Shakespeare's "Hamlet," Polonius cautions people to stop talking, "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."

While listening and speaking go hand in hand, you can't listen and speak at the same time.

Today, everyone is busy. To get everything done, a person will do many things at one time. They think they can listen and do at the same time. It may seem easy, but is it? Research states a person listens at 400 words per minute. A person speaks at 125 per minute. So, that gives a person 275 words per minute to do something else. What does this say to the speaker?

Good listening is an art. A true listener takes an interest in the talker. He or she establishes eye contact by looking and not staring at the talker. The listener stops what he or she is doing and listens. How often do you try and talk with someone while he/she is watching television, reading the

paper, peeling potatoes, or many other activities?

The typical response of the multi-tasked listener is "Uh, hum" or "whatever." By putting down the paper or turning off the television, the listener is saying non-verbally "you are important. I want to listen to what you say."

The payback is a stronger relationship. Also, the talker may not have to repeat him or herself.

Remove distractions. Don't doodle, tap, shuffle papers, or clear the table while someone is talking. If necessary, move to another room or shut the door. Physically move in and out of the conversation. As you become more interested or concerned, move forward. As you become more relaxed, sit back. Acknowledge the speaker's feelings.

You might say, "You're confused right now. Let's talk about it."

Listening more than speaking helps a person clarify a problem before rushing in to a solution. Good listeners help children and adults to solve their own problems. By repeating what is heard, a listener reflects on what is said.

"You sound angry, frustrated, excited..."

If the reflection is correct, the listener affirms what the speaker is saying. If it is not correct, encourage the speaker to elaborate further until the listener and speaker understand each other.

How often do you say, "You don't understand." What is needed is time and a chance to listen, reflect, speak, and listen again. Just like an artist takes time to paint a masterpiece, a good listener takes time to communicate effectively.

If you are pressed for time, be honest. Tell the speaker. Schedule a time when both parties can talk. "Give me 10 minutes to finish washing the dishes and we can talk." Then devote your attention to the conversation.

A good listener asks questions. The questions start with "how," "what if," "why," and "tell me about."

These words and phrases evoke detailed responses that are open ended. They open the conversation to further development. After asking a question, a listener gives the speaker time to frame the response.

Good listeners are slow to speak and quick to listen. When questions begin with "did you," "are you," "can you," it requires only a one word responses such as "yes" or "no."

Little or no information is shared. Closed ended questions sound accusatory. It is like going on a very long fact finding mission.

Hold your temper. Angry feelings get in the way of listening. Anger takes over listening. It clouds the communication. Just as an artist puts down his or her brush when emotions take over, a good listener asks for a break. Take a break. Have a glass of water. Do something else. Again, be honest. Admit your anger. Admit that you can't commit yourself to listening and be angry at the same time. Angry speakers use emotionally charged words. Angry listeners feel the emotions and hear the emotionally charged words and not the true message. Step away. Move back when the anger subsides.

Finally, ask yourself: "Would I listen to me right now?" Nature gives people two ears but only one mouth. This is a gentle hint that people should listen more than they talk. Listen more. You don't know what you are missing.

Elverson Fire Company Fall Antiques Show And Sale

ELVERSON (Chester Co.) — On Nov. 17 and 18, Elverson Fire Company will conduct its 64th semi-annual Antique Show and Sale. The show is hosted by the fire company for the benefit of the New Engine Fund. This year's show includes 44 dealers displaying fine country furniture, primitives, American folk art, quilts, linens, baskets, tools, toys, dolls, pewter and more.

Admission is \$3.50. The show is open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. The Elverson Fire Company is located on Route 23, three miles east of Morgantown, exit 22 of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

The Holiday Inn Morgantown is offering a special rate for anyone showing proof of show attendance. Contact: Rose Lund at (610) 286-3000, Ext. 181.

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