

Listening Tips

The following techniques will help you improve your listening skills.

- Listen carefully to what others have to say, whether you agree totally or not.
- Listen for the part of what someone is saying that is new and important. Let the person know the information he or she is sharing is important and you appreciate him or her for bringing it to your attention.
- Listen to criticisms about the Head Start program, without becoming defensive.
- Put yourself in other people's "shoes" and try to understand their point of view. Ask questions to clarify exactly what they are saying, before commenting or offering any suggestions.
- Do not listen to rumors about colleagues or families; if rumors persist, investigate them directly.
- After listening to colleagues or families, write down points that require follow-up action or attention.
- Include time in your day to "reach out" to others and listen to "news" about their families, jobs, or other interests.
- Restate what people say to let them know you are listening to them.
- Reinforce the success colleagues and families are having. Accentuate the positive!
- Deal with any conflicts or issues as they arise; talk to colleagues or families immediately to "clear the air" and work things out. Don't let "things go", hoping they will get better without any action on your part.
- Never leave people with a sense of hopelessness or frustration. Always tell the people when you will get back to them with further information or a response to their concerns.
- Freely admit when you have made an error or don't have an immediate answer to a question.
- Do not use jargon or complicated terms when responding to others; if you are not sure whether they understood what you said, ask them to tell you what they "heard".

Adapted from Beers, M.C., et al. Parent Involvement in Day Care: A Resource Manual for Day Care Providers. Creative Associates, Inc., Washing, D.C., 1982