

THE SHAPE OF YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE

**A CURRICULUM TO HELP PARENTS SUCCEED IN GUIDING THEIR CHILDREN'S
EMOTIONAL, MORAL, AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

(FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN AGES 6-14)

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Printed in the United States of America

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This curriculum was developed for the use of the International School Project.

Dedicated to the many educators from countries around the world who have masterfully and creatively taught our previous curricula and encouraged us to develop this work on these crucial issues.

CAN MY CHILD REALLY BE TAUGHT TO LISTEN?

**SESSION
3**

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

1. A child can best learn to listen by observing good listening skills in his or her parents. Modeling listening is a skill essential to a child's ability to feel loved and to learn listening skills.
2. Parents need to learn the skill of reflective listening so their child can learn it from them and listen to them.
3. Reading to your child is crucial in developing listening as well as other life skills.
4. Parents need to learn how to be "askable" so that children will be open to their influence and teaching.
5. Meal conversations are another opportunity to help a child learn to listen.
6. Encouraging your child to teach you (even things you already know) develops the child's motivation and ability to listen.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, parents should be able to:

1. Begin or continue modeling reflective listening at home.
2. Begin or continue reading to their children.
3. Develop or continue developing "askability."
4. Structure or continue structuring meal conversations with their children.
5. Seek opportunities to learn skills from their children.

KEY TERMS

MODELING: serving as an example by demonstrating skills and character qualities one wishes to develop in children.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING: the ability to tell a speaker in one's own words the content of his or her message, and the feelings behind the message, and request correction or confirmation.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT: taking advantage of real situations in life to teach new skills, knowledge, or values to children.

ASKABILITY: loving and approachable manner that invites a child to seek out his or her parent for advice, clarification, and feedback.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When babies are newly born, parents listen carefully to their newborns, even to make sure they are breathing. They learn the meaning of different cries that babies make to express hunger or other discomforts. Once babies learn to talk and become more independent, parents slowly reduce the focused listening time they give to children and turn to “more important” conversations. By the time many children start school, they can rarely get their parents’ attention. On the other hand teachers, other students, and playmates listen, so children feel more valued by these new listeners than by their parents. By the time children are in the sixth grade, it is possible that they have stopped listening to their parents and are closed to their influence.

However, it is not enough just to listen to a child. The child needs to *know* that Mom or Dad has heard and understood. The child feels listened to and valued when Mom or Dad, or both, let him or her know they have heard the whole message – the content and the feelings behind the content of the message. Listening is crucial because it raises a child’s sense that parents value him or her. When children sense they are valued, they value their parents in response and remain open to their influence. Consistent listening is a much more powerful way to communicate love than buying things for children.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

For this session, you will need the following materials:

- Tulip picture and drawing paper or blank pages from journals for each participant
- Visuals to be set at front of room: Lesson 1 Parenting Style Characteristics Chart and Lesson 2 Key Focus Chart

LESSON

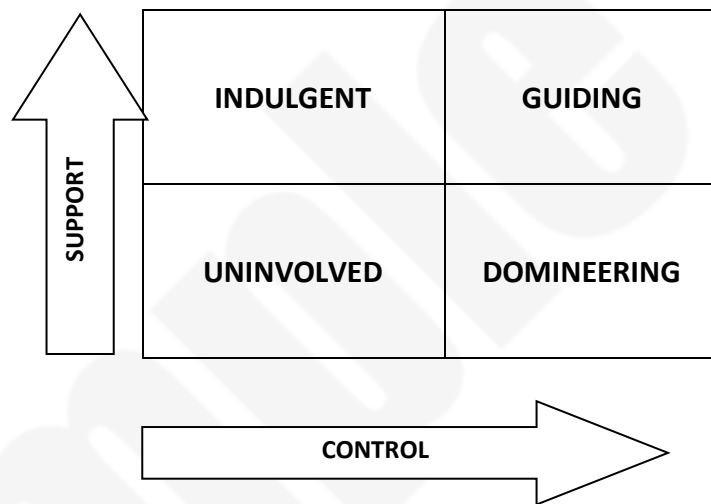
BEGINNING THE LESSON

WELCOME AND
OVERVIEW

3 MINUTES

[Before the class arrives, put the Parenting Styles Characteristics Chart on the board.]

Let's review what we have studied so far. In Session 1 through an inventory, you were introduced to four styles of parenting. They are here on our poster:



In Session 2, we worked on some practical ways of communicating love. You were asked to choose one of three practical ways of communicating love (eye contact, appropriate physical touch, or focused attention) and to work on that to communicate love to your child. Later, you will have a chance to talk about how it went.

Today we will try to answer the question, "Can My Child Really Be Taught to Listen?"

The simple answer is "Yes!" But the answers to the question "How?" may surprise you. I'll be sharing six suggestions with you that can help.

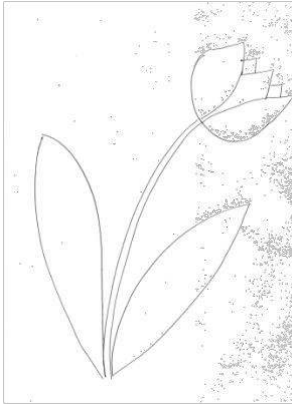
LISTENING ACTIVITY

10 MINUTES

Right now I'd like us to see how well we do at listening. Open to a clean sheet of paper in your journal. I would like you to draw what you hear me describe to you.

[Read each of the following directions slowly, one at a time. When you see that participants have completed each step, move on to the next step.]

What finished product should look like:



1. About one-third down from the top of your paper, draw a semicircle with the ends pointing slightly to the right.
2. Across the open part of the semicircle, draw three open triangle hat shapes.
3. Draw two little pointed hat shapes in between the points of the first three shapes.
4. Draw a long, curved line starting from the center of the semicircle and going down to a point about one-fourth of the way from the bottom left-hand corner of the paper.
5. Draw another line that closely parallels the curved line you just drew.
6. Starting at the bottom of the first curving line, draw a curved line going about halfway up the page and with the end pointing to the left.
7. Draw another curved line starting from the same point that closes the first one off.
8. Starting at the bottom of the second curving line, the one that touches the bottom of the semi-circle, draw a curved line going about two-thirds up the page with the end pointing to the right.
9. Draw another arc that closes that one off.
10. Draw curved lines from the bottom of the big hats to the center of the semicircle.

[This activity may generate a lot of interaction as participants seek to understand what they are asked to do and begin to compare their drawings during the giving of each instruction.]

[After you have completed step 10, you may want to encourage them to share their drawing with their neighbor and then bring their attention to the front of the room. As you now read each of your instructions again, draw the picture as it was intended, or retrace the lines on your poster for each stroke as it relates to the 10 steps above – to look like a tulip.]

To demonstrate HOW you came up with this drawing, refer to resource document that projects each stroke.

Does anyone have a drawing that looks like this? *[Show the completed tulip picture.]* As you see each other's drawings and how they compare to what I intended to communicate, you can see the need not only for listening but also for verifying that you understand what was communicated. It probably would have been helpful if you had been given a model of what you were drawing and opportunities to clarify what you heard as you were drawing.

Today we will look at a number of ways to help our children

with their listening and communication skills.



= 13 minutes

EXPLORING THE LESSON

SIX WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD LISTEN

MODELING: see definition in KEY TERMS

As with so many things parents pass on to their children, good listening skills are best taught by modeling them yourself. **MODELING** is a more effective way of teaching listening than scolding, nagging, begging, or other ways of enforcing compliance. If you listen respectfully and effectively to your child and have a good love relationship with him or her, your child will usually want to follow your example. Today we will look at a number of ways to help our children with their listening and communication skills.

1. REFLECTIVE LISTENING

5 MINUTES

The most powerful way to teach your child to listen is to listen to him or her. This is called "**REFLECTIVE LISTENING.**"

Write **REFLECTIVE LISTENING** on the board.

When you give your child focused attention and then demonstrate that you've heard and understood, your child feels valued and the love bond between you grows stronger. When this continues to take place, over time your child will want to be more like you, and in time will begin to listen as you do.

HOMEWORK from LESSON 2 is shared here.

To begin working on modeling the skill of listening, please turn to the parent next to you, other than your spouse, and tell him or her about:

1. An attempt you made to communicate love to your child in the last month.
2. How your child responded.
3. How you felt about your child's response.

You have a minute each. I will keep time.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING DEMONSTRATION BY TEACHER

Would one of you please stand and briefly share what you shared with the parent next to you? Let's all listen carefully.

Three aspects of REFLECTIVE

You told us that you . . . [Repeat as closely as you can what was

LISTENING:

1. CONTENT
2. FEELING(S)
3. REQUEST

said.] Am I right?

Now let me ask all of you – I tried first to reflect the CONTENT of the report in my own words. How did I do? *[Accept a few answers.]*

Thank you. Secondly, I tried to reflect his or her FEELINGS. How did I do? *[Accept a few answers.]*

Thirdly, I said one other important thing. Did any of you catch it? *[Accept a few answers.]*

I made a REQUEST by asking, “Am I right?” or “Was I close?” or “Did I hear you correctly?” allowing the speaker to correct or confirm my reflection. In so doing, you avoid misunderstanding the intent of what was said, and you reaffirm the speaker.

Emphasizing these three aspects of MODELING REFLECTIVE LISTENING shows that you are engaged in the conversation.

When a parent reflects not only a child’s content but also his or her feelings, the child-parent bond is strengthened because the conversation is not just head to head. It becomes heart to heart. When you have responded to your child in this way long enough, he or she will begin responding in a similar manner to you, and you will know he or she is listening.

The words to remember and have in your head are CONTENT, FEELINGS and REQUEST for confirmation or correction.

This process may seem simplistic, but when you consistently apply these listening skills, they help foster healthy communication between you and your child and convey love to your child. Because reflective listening opens your child to greater parental influence, your child is more likely to copy your example over time and become a better listener.

Write on the board:

CONTENT
FEELING(S)
REQUEST



= 18 minutes

**REFLECTIVE LISTENING
PRACTICE**

9 MINUTES

Let’s practice Reflective Listening. To do so, I would like you to re-arrange your chairs so you can sit in groups of three. Please re-arrange your seats now, and when you are ready I’ll give you the next instruction.

Now please count off in your groups of three: 1, 2, and 3.

First Practice

Person 1 in each threesome: You will pretend to be a first-

Give each group of three about two minutes, and then ask if they requested correction and confirmation from Person 1.

grade child.

Person 2 in each threesome: You are Person 1's mother or father, and I would like you to respond to the **CONTENT** of Person 1's message.

Person 3 in each threesome: You are also Person 1's mother or father, and I would like you to respond to Person 1's **FEELINGS**.

SITUATION: Person 1, please turn to your parent partners 2 and 3 and say, *"Papa, Mama, my teacher scolded me today in front of the whole class for not having my homework completed."*

Second Practice

Give each group of three another two minutes, and then ask again if they requested correction and confirmation from Person 2.

Let's practice again. Person 2 will be the child, and Person 3 will reflect **CONTENT**, and Person 1, please reflect **FEELINGS**.

SITUATION: Person 2, please turn to your partners and say, *"Mama, I don't feel good. May I stay home from school today?"*

Third Practice

Give each group of three another two minutes, and then ask again if they requested correction and confirmation from Person 2.

Let's practice one more time. Person 3 will now be the child, and Person 1 will reflect **CONTENT**, and Person 2, please reflect **FEELINGS**.

SITUATION: Person 3, please turn to your partners and say, *"My friend, Ilya, sits next to me in class and bothers me all the time. He whispers, passes me notes, and distracts me from hearing what the teacher is saying. He is a good friend, but what should I do? I don't want trouble with my teacher or Ilya."*

Summarize REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Those of you who role-played the child – did any of your parents forget to reflect and simply advise you on what to do?

How complete was your parents' reflection? Did it include all three components?

How accurate was your parents' reflection?

Did you feel heard?

The best way to teach your child to listen is to actively listen to him or her. This is called Reflective Listening. Changing listening habits is a process and takes time, so keep on listening reflectively, and in time, it is likely your child will begin to reflect what you have said. Whether he does or not, by listening you are communicating that your child is valuable to you and worth your time and undivided attention.



= 27 minutes

**2. TEACHING IN
CONTEXT****3 MINUTES**

2. Write **TEACHING IN CONTEXT** on the board.

A second way you can help your child learn to listen is to **TEACH IN THE CONTEXT OF DAILY LIFE**. Taking advantage of spontaneous occurrences in everyday life gives you opportunity to teach listening in the context of an incident by saying a message once and then asking your child to reflect your message back to you.

You probably do this when you respond to incidents like accidents or other occurrences that require your involvement. If your child spilled a glass of milk and broke the glass, for example, you might say something like this:

“It’s best not to have wet hands when carrying a big glass of milk like that. It makes a big mess and no one likes cleaning those up. The broken glass on the floor is dangerous, too, and we don’t want anyone stepping on it and cutting his feet. How about getting what you’ll need to clean it up? And then you can get another glass when your hands are dry.”

You can coach your child through the listening process by prompting him or her to reflect all three of the components. Keep working on it together until your child has reflected all three components accurately — content, feelings and request.

Start by only asking for your child to reflect the content. You will know he or she heard at least the content. At first, this may be a little frustrating for you and your child because this is a skill that requires time and practice. But the reward will be improved communication between you and your child.

One thing that parents and teachers must keep in mind is the amount of new information that can be absorbed by a child. Particularly for young children, it would be best to teach through the spilled-milk problem in parts.

First, you could talk about HOW it happened – the wet hands – and walk through **Reflective Listening** with just that. When you’re sure that this part of the message has gotten through, you can go on to cleaning up the mess and repeat the listening process. After that, discuss the broken glass and then how to clean it up. Finally, focus on the correct way to carry a glass of milk. It will take longer this way, but the child will be better able to comprehend what you are saying.



= 30 minutes

**PARENTING JOURNAL
ACTIVITY & SKIT**

20 MINUTES

In your journals, take about three to four minutes to list some recent incidents at home that required you to do some teaching or correction. Then get in your groups of three and share your list. Choose one of the incidents on each list to use for Reflective Listening practice. Follow the same procedure we just used in the Reflective Listening activity. You have 10 minutes.

[Have groups choose one incident to work into a short skit – about three to four minutes long. If your group is small and you only have two or three groups of three, you may want to allow them to do longer skits or to do two or three skits each. After each group completes its skit, have the entire group evaluate how effectively the skit modeled Reflective Listening.]



= 50 minutes

**3. READING TO YOUR
CHILD**

2 MINUTES

3. Write **READING TO YOUR CHILD** on the board.

Another great way to teach your child to listen is to **READ TO HIM OR HER**. Some of you may ask, “Why should I read to my child when he or she is learning to read?” There are many advantages in reading to your child.

Reading aloud to your child . . .

1. Gives practice in listening
2. Builds interest in books and literature

3. Promotes togetherness
4. Builds vocabulary and knowledge of language and literature
5. Enlarges horizons
6. Provides opportunities for conversation about likes and dislikes, opinions, dreams, possibilities, values
7. Gives cultural orientation
8. Enhances awareness of the reading process
9. Provides opportunity for building critical thinking abilities
10. Prepares the child for greater school success

READING ACTIVITY

8 MINUTES

Reflections on Reading

[Give groups the next six minutes (two minutes each) to tell their group partners about some of their memories of being read to by a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, or someone else. After the allotted time, draw their attention to the front and ask:]

What did you learn by being read to?

[After a few responses, take a short break.]

Before we finish with our list of ways to help your child listen, let's take a 10-minute break.



= 60 minutes

10-MINUTE BREAK

= 70 minutes

4. BEING ASKABLE

5 MINUTES

4. Write **BEING ASKABLE** on the board.
Keep communication lines open

Another great way to teach your child to listen is to **BE "ASKABLE"** or be open to questions. All of us tend to listen for an answer to a question we have asked. Children do too. Unfortunately over time, many parents become the last person a child wants to ask a question. So it is crucial for you to be able to keep the lines of communication open, especially as your child moves toward the teen years.

Keep him or her talking to you. Don't let your child retreat into a world that excludes you. If you let it happen, many teens will

Involve children in your life and be involved in children's lives

IMPORTANT TIP:

Being askable is more than being approachable

Participation in these habits show a parent is not askable.

build walls that shut you out at the very time their relationship with you is most crucial.

Your child can easily slip into a world of music, TV, electronic games, and peers. It is only with your tenacious involvement that you will continue to have a role in helping to establish the direction of your child's life.

While it is normal for children to build new relationships as they grow, it does not have to mean they will exclude you. Perhaps you can involve them in helping cook meals or work with you to clean up the dishes. Often it is effective to sit down on the edge of their bed and talk about their day just before they go to sleep. Another time is right after they get home from school. Have some snack -- like cookies and milk -- if it isn't too close to the evening meal. Don't forget to take advantage of commute time. You can have meaningful conversations with your children while driving in the car or taking public transportation. You can also invite them to take a walk with you.

Be alert for times when they initiate a conversation with you. When that happens, it is time for you to "STOP-THINK!" Don't miss the opportunity of that moment. Whether you respond with genuine interest or superficial lip service will determine whether you open or close the communication channel with your child. (Be a student of your child's patterns -- the "open" time will tend to be the same every day.)

Don't forget to communicate love using the three practical methods: eye contact, appropriate touch, and focused attention.

Being askable is more than being approachable. Most parents are approachable simply by being parents. When children need or want something, they will approach a parent and request it, hoping the parent will say "Yes." But "askability" is about being sought out for advice and help.

Many children learn that their parent(s) is not "askable." He or she may:

- Be too busy
- Not really listen to the question being asked
- Have his or her own quick-fix answer
- Dismiss questions as silly
- Be angry
- Be depressed or drunk around their children

"ASKABILITY" ACTIVITY

10 MINUTES

ACTIVITY:

After five minutes, ask all the reporters to stand. Ask each one to share one idea that hasn't already been shared, until all their ideas have been mentioned, and then sit down. Suggest that everyone take notes so he or she can remember some of these ideas for use at home.

- Simply be disinterested in what children are thinking or feeling.

I would like each group of three to join another group to discuss "askability." In your groups, discuss this question: "What do you think parents can do to become more 'askable'?" Please appoint a recorder to write down your ideas and a reporter to share them with everyone, and then begin thinking creatively. You will have five minutes to come up with ideas.

Add any of the following that have not been mentioned after the reporters have finished:

- Ask your child "why" questions.
- When asked a question, thank your child for asking.
- When asked a question, treat it respectfully.
- Sometimes when answering a "why" question, answer with "What do you think?"
- Ask a question that cannot be answered too easily, then ask for hypotheses. Suggest humorous hypotheses.
- Periodically tell your child that the only dumb question is the question that never was asked.

There are many ways to nurture closeness and communication with children. Some of those ways we have already talked about or you have come up with them in your groups:

- Reading to your child
- Spending regular one-on-one time with your child
- Involving your child in your daily activities
- Becoming involved and interested in your child's activities and interests.

Now we will finish today with two more ways of teaching your child to listen.



= 85 minutes

5. MEAL CONVERSATIONS

5 MINUTES

5. Write **MEAL CONVERSATIONS** on the board.

NOTE: If parents don't eat meals with their children and it is not feasible to change, then suggest going out together

Another great way of teaching your child to listen is to structure meal conversations. Of course, this is impossible if you don't regularly eat with your child. If you don't, try to find another time when you can talk, such as going out for a cup of coffee, tea, or ice cream, for example. During this time, don't talk about something that needs to be changed or corrected. The idea of meal conversations, even if you cannot always have them over a meal, is to encourage your child to talk about whatever they wish to discuss.

for some activity that allows them to converse with one another.

**MEAL CONVERSATIONS
ACTIVITY**
10 MINUTES

You get to model listening and reflecting that encourages your child first to open up, and second to start asking you questions. But to have this kind of family meal conversation, what rules of discussion do you need?

I would like you to turn back to your groups of three. In the next few minutes, see if you can suggest rules that will structure meal conversations. During the meal, you want everyone to have the opportunity to talk and everyone to have the opportunity to listen.

If you seldom have meals together with your child, you might consider going for a walk, to a concert or play, or getting ice cream, a cup of coffee, or a soda. Often your children will be more likely to talk openly if you take them to a place they suggest.

Now take five minutes to come up with ideas to structure a meal conversation.

[When groups come together, have them share what they came up with and have them take notes on ideas that worked.]

Fostering good meal conversations takes perseverance and patience. Don't expect every meal to be a great conversation. Try varying your questions or the topics you suggest.



= 100 minutes

**6. LEARNING FROM
YOUR CHILD**

5 MINUTES

6. Write **LEARNING FROM YOUR CHILD** on the board

I have one more suggestion for getting your child to listen. Find something your child likes to do and ask him or her to teach you how to do it — for example, maybe playing a video game is something your child can teach you. Even if you already know how to do it, ask your child to teach you to do it his or her way. You have an opportunity to model listening, and you will know how well it worked when your child asks you to teach him or her something. Learning from your child models good listening.



= 105 minutes

ENDING THE LESSON

**PRACTICE LISTENING
SUMMARY**
10 MINUTES

We have worked on several ways of teaching a child to listen:

1. Reflective listening (content, feelings, request)
2. Teaching in context
3. Reading to your child
4. Being “askable”
5. Meal conversations
6. Learning from your child

The greatest of these is **MODELING REFLECTIVE LISTENING**. You can do this in combination with each of the other ways. But most parents need to practice modeling reflective listening before it comes naturally.

**LISTENING REVIEW
ACTIVITY**

Split into pairs. I would like you to practice Reflective Listening one more time before the end of our session. Please turn to one other parent in your group and decide who will pretend to be the child first and who will be the parent.

Now for those of you who are pretending to be the child, I would like you to think of a complaint your son or daughter brought to you in the last month and complain to your partner the same way your child complained to you.

Those of you who are pretending to be parents, please reflect the child’s complaint remembering to include the content, the feeling(s), and the request for correction or confirmation. Then together discuss how you did. I will give you your next instruction in five minutes.

Now those of you who pretended to be parents get to be the child, and those who pretended to be child get to be the parent. You’ll have five minutes again.



= 115 minutes

**FAMILY
APPLICATION**

Teaching your child to listen will mean that you practice the skills we have worked on in this session at home. So for Family Application I would like you to:

- Practice Reflective Listening at least once a day between now and the next session.

- Choose at least one other skill to practice this month.

Record your experiences in your Parenting Journal. You will have an opportunity to share how you are doing next time.

REMEMBER:

We've been given two ears
and one mouth
to listen twice as much as we speak.

**INVITATION
TO RETURN**

Thank you for coming to this session, and for your interest and participation.

Our next time together we will talk about how to develop respect and responsibility in your child.

DATE: _____

TIME: _____



= 120 minutes

RESOURCE – TULIP DRAWING