

LISTENING.

Children and teenagers need a sense of being listened to and understood and a chance to express and clear their feelings. In times of distress they express their hurt through many ways -some include shouting, crying, swearing, screams etc. It is important that we encourage the release of feelings rather than attempt to distract them, ignore them or say things like 'don't cry' or 'don't be angry' etc. Adults need to help them to face up to and handle their own problems.

How we can be better listeners:

Make yourself more available. If you are too absorbed in TV or always busy, you will miss out on many opportunities to listen to them.

Good listening sometimes means remaining silent! At other times an understanding grunt or nod might help.

Try and listen 'beyond' the words – can you pick up on what they are feeling. Parents always think its their duty to come up with a solution. Whereas listening with understanding is actually the beginning of the solution and often the only solution that is needed.

PLANNING AND SKILL PRACTICE:

Think of the last time your child / teen accused you of 'not listening' or 'not understanding'. Think about how you handled the situation. How could you change your approach? Instead of them 'bottling things up' then it getting worse, could you set aside some time to ask them how they are feeling or to do some listening.

Remember listen for feelings.