

Active Listening

NON-VERBAL

- A non-verbal listening response involves little or no verbal activity, but you **show attentiveness by nodding and making facial expressions** in response to your children's statements. Non-verbal responses also include such 'comments' as "I see" or "Uh hum."
- Through body language, you can convey to them that you are interested in what they have to say and are willing to take the time to listen.
- When you sense that your children want to talk, you set aside what you are doing, establish eye contact or lean forward to indicate you are listening, and don't answer the phone or look at your mobile device.
- These non-verbal responses can be represented by a ticket to a movie – in which you are watching and listening and attending, but not speaking.

CONTENT RESPONSE

- A content listening response **reflects back to your children the content of what you heard**. This should be a paraphrase and not a parroting, which can be annoying and can sound false.
- For example, when a child says, "I can't sleep because I think a monster is going to get me," a content listening response would be: "When you think there is a monster who might hurt you, you can't get to sleep."
- These Content Responses can be represented by a mirror because you are reflecting back what your children have said to you.

FEELING RESPONSE

- A feeling listening response **focuses on the emotions you think your children might be experiencing**. Notice the word "think" – the tone for any Active Listening response is usually tentative, almost as if it ended with a question mark, as if you are checking with your children that you accurately picked up the feeling underlying the words.
- A feeling listening response to the child who can't sleep would be: "When you think a monster might get you, you are too scared to go to sleep."

CLARIFYING RESPONSE

- A clarifying listening response takes a much **broader or deeper view of the situation** your children are facing, offers other possible reactions and identifies potential needs, values, expectations, wishes, and underlying issues.
- A clarifying listening response to the child worried about the monster would be: "Thinking there is a monster somewhere around makes you feel as though you have to stay awake so he can't get you; if you fall asleep, you worry you won't be able to protect yourself."

TRUTH RESPONSE

- When you use a universal truth listening response with your children, you are offering a broad commentary about the situation that reflects their needs, feelings, or experience. Often these responses are **ways to teach your children a principle about life that relates to the situation** and their reactions to it.
- Such statements can give your children food for thought as far as processing the situation and can help them to feel less alone. After all, you are telling your children that others have walked in their shoes and gone before them. Making your statement in the third person makes it seem more objective.
- A Universal Truth listening response to the frightened child might be: "People can be afraid even if they have been told over and over that there is nothing to be afraid of. The feelings just stay even if the person knows in his head that what he is afraid of really isn't there."