

To Listen is to Love

by Gregory Bland



There are moments when I enjoy what seems like a spontaneous connection with my children. Those times when conversation flows naturally and easily and I just know, in my knower, that there is a genuine heartfelt connection between us. Then there are the planned conversations, the times we have set aside specifically to follow up on a commitment my child has made so that I can encourage their progress. In either situation, spontaneous or planned, there is

no greater gift we can give our children than to authentically listen so that we might understand what they are sensing, feeling and experiencing.

David Augsburger stated well, “Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.” As you take steps toward listening so that you may understand your child, here are some suggestions to help you.

- **Focus upon relational health.** The foundation of great coaching is a relationship of trust. Focusing upon health within the relationship will naturally open the door to touching the deeper areas of our child’s life through coaching when they are ready.
- **Listen more than you speak.** Allow your child to completely express their thoughts, feelings, ideas and opinions without interrupting or jumping to conclusions.
- **Actively engage in the conversation.** Our children know and understand when we are engaged or distracted and they love when parents truly engage them in conversation. It speaks to them and gives them an understanding that, “I am important enough that mom/dad takes time to talk with me.”
- **Ask for clarification.** Never assume that you fully understand what your child intends, always clarify and listen for their affirmation, “Yes, that is what I mean.”
- **Resist the temptation to move too quickly to solutions.** Allow time for your child to speak, and share what they are thinking. Often you will find that the solution comes to them as they talk about it and the process of discovery is much greater than our simply telling them what to do.
- **Listen beyond the words.** What is their body language, facial expressions, tone of voice telling you?
- **Ask permission to go deeper.** Coaching is unique in that it touches the deeper matters of the heart quickly, which can be uncomfortable for some people. When you sense that coaching could take your child to a deeper, more reflective place, always ask permission to do so and honor their desire.
- **If you tune out, admit it.** You might as well come clean because they already know. Simply let them know that you tuned out for a moment and ask them to go back and repeat what you missed. This allows them to know that you truly want to hear what they are saying and are mature enough to admit when you’ve missed it.

By authentically listening, we create an opportunity to build a deeper relationship with one another and truly understand what our children are sensing, feeling, and experiencing. There is no greater way to support relationship than giving our children the time they need to be fully heard and understood.

Until next time,

Enjoy your journey into Pro-Active Parent Coaching.

Your friend and Pro-Active Parent Coach

Gregory Bland

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**Gregory and Lynn Bland currently reside in beautiful Nova Scotia, Canada. They have just completed writing a parenting book Pro-Active Parent Coaching: Capturing the Heart of Your Child. Which is a parent's guide to coaching. Additionally they are providing pastoral care, and participate in various speaking engagements. For more information visit pro-activeparentcoaching.com or write to greg@pro-activeparentcoaching.com.*

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