

Listening to Parents as an Ally...Using Positive Communication Skills

The intention of listening as an ally is to be able to understand, support, and learn. When we listen as an ally, we listen as a partner. When we listen as an ally, we:

- Encourage others to also listen as an ally.
- Ask more than we tell.
- Listen to consider...not to defend.

For many of the parents, you may be the only person from the District that has reached out to them. The focus of your call is to:

1. Find out how your students and their families are doing.
2. Ask if they have all the necessary materials to do the school work that you provided.
3. Reassure them that although you are not physically with their child, you still are very much still with them and connected.
4. Ask them what needs they have.
5. Inform them of the best way to reach you if they have a need and/or question.

On the following sheet, I have provided sample open-ended questions that you may want to reference during your conversations. If I can be of support to you, please feel free to contact me at mpurchin@purchinconsulting.com or 310-202-1155.

Tips for Listening as an Ally

Statement	Purpose	To do this....	Examples
Encouraging	To convey interest To encourage the other person to keep talking	...don't agree or disagree ...use neutral words ...use varying voice intonations	"Can you tell me more about...?"
Clarifying	To help you clarify what is said To get more information To help the speaker see other points of view	...ask questions ...share your interpretation to encourage the speaker to explain further	"Help me understand what you mean by..."
Restating	To show you are listening and understanding what is being said To check your meaning and interpretation	...restate basic ideas and facts	"So you are feeling nervous about catching the flu; is that right?"
Reflecting	To show that you understand how the person feels	...reflect the speaker's basic feelings	"You seem very upset."
Summarizing	To review progress To pull together important ideas and facts To establish a basis for further discussion	...restate major ideas expressed, including feelings	"These seem to be the key ideas you've expressed..."
Validating	To acknowledge the worthiness of the other person	...acknowledge the value of their issues and feelings ...show appreciation for their efforts and actions	"I appreciate your willingness to keep talking about this issue."

THE ART OF THE QUESTION

Ask questions that encourage communication:

- Tell me more about ...
- I am not sure I understand the part about...
- Let me make sure I understood correctly...
- Can you help me understand?
- What would you like to see happen today?
- Let me summarize what you just said...
- I want to review your statements and note that this seems to have been very frustrating for you...
- I gather you have been very discouraged about this...
- Can you help me get a better idea of the reason for your request?
- Help me understand your view/perception of the issues.
- What would it look like to you if this were resolved/not resolved?
- Tell me more about how you feel about this...
- What will happen if this is not worked out today?
- What will the program look like without this part?
- What will life look like if this is not resolved? If it is resolved?
- I want to thank you for discussing such a hard issue with us and I hope you can tell us more about...
- I am not sure I got this part of your overview correct. I understand that when you asked for...

What to Avoid?

- *Avoid a question that can only be answered by a "yes" or "no".*
- *Avoid a question that begins with why.*
- *Avoid asking anyone to talk about their "side".*