



# Ten ways to Listen to those we Love

**Is your home a listening home? Listening to one another, REALLY listening to the person beyond the words, is an important expression of love.**

## 1. Stop what you're doing

Physically turn your chair around, move away from your desk, leave the dishes, and don't lunge for the phone on the first ring. Let the person speaking know that 'you have my full attention.'

## 2. Look into their eyes

They say that the eye is the window to the soul. It's true. When we look into a person's eyes instead of glancing all over the room, we 'hear' things beyond words.

## 3. Treat this as sacred time

A child's chatter about his/her day. A friend revealing a heartache. A young couple announcing their engagement. Joyful, tragic or mundane, disclosures like these are sacred moments. Recognize them as such. A subtle gesture, like resting your hands, palms upward, on your lap can help to open you to this sacred time.

## 4. Be open to God

Listen, not just with your ears, not just with your brain, but engage your heart. Be aware that you and your conversation partner are enfolded in the mystery of God's love. Adopt a prayerful mindset as you listen.

## 5. Don't rush in with advice

Let the person have their say. Don't jump the gun, anticipate the next sentence or rush in with advice. Wait. Pause. Have patience. Allow space for 'more' to be revealed.

## 6. Treasure the silence

Learn to be comfortable with silence. Out of silence wonderful things can emerge: a relief-filled sigh, the gift of tears, a clear insight, a fresh question, a movement of grace... some things just can't be expressed verbally.

## 7. Listen with your face

Your face is wonderfully expressive of 'you!' Your face can convey empathy without taking up the other's verbal space. A steady gaze, a warm smile, a wince of pain, an encouraging wink... these are all ways to 'say' 'I'm listening, I hear you, I'm with you, I love you.'

## 8. Listen with touch

A firm grasp or a gentle touch, a pat on the back or an intimate embrace: appropriate to the relationship and respecting the other's boundaries, our sense of touch can convey how deeply we are listening, without having to use any words at all.

## 9. Give feedback

When the other has finished speaking, it can be helpful to ask for clarity. E.g., 'When you say that your teacher "took it out on you" do you mean...'

Likewise, you can 'feed back' what you heard the other say, especially acknowledging feelings. E.g., 'Sounds like you were treated unfairly. I can understand why you're so angry.' Even when you don't agree with the speaker, or you wish to challenge their position, your response will be more readily received if the other person first feels that he/she has been truly heard.

## 10. Follow up

A simple acknowledgment of your conversation at a later date (e.g. 'How did your exam go?' 'Has this week been easier than last week?') can convey to the other that her words impacted on you, that you cared enough to remember his situation.

Helpful Hint

The build up of hurts can impede our capacity to listen. If you ever find yourself recoiling with irritation or 'switching off' when a particular person makes a claim on your ears, chances are there is healing needed in your relationship. Note these reactions, take them to prayer, talk with a trusted friend, then seek out a healing remedy (e.g., face into an issue, talk to a counsellor or spiritual guide, receive the sacrament of reconciliation, sign up for a retreat... whatever will help you to work through your hurt to a deeper peace.