

9/26/08 *Notes from Nirvair*

Last week I shared some ideas about listening. A few days later, I received this issue of Kid's Talk, a free Montessori e-newsletter. (You might like to subscribe). The article is a nice expansion on the listening theme, so I'll share it with you. Getting to the truth of a situation can be a challenge sometimes. When we listen for understanding and ask questions to explore all the perspectives, we get a clearer focus on reality. I hope you will find this article helpful.

Nirvair



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The High Cost of Low Trust

"My parents don't trust me anymore," said thirteen-year-old Steve.

"Oh," I said, but thought to myself, RED ALERT. This wasn't going to be a regular sit-at-the-table-and-eat-pizza party conversation.

My memory neurons buzzed, trying to find the listening/questioning tool I had recently learned called evidence and impact questioning.

The gist of this two-step listening technique is to gather evidence by asking the classic who, what, when, where, why and how questions. When you think you've gathered enough evidence, you ask impact questions, such as, "And then what happens?" or "How do you measure that?"

"Steve, why do you say your parents don't trust you?" I said, trying to gather the information that would show the grounds for Steve's statement.

"Wherever I go I have to get my friends' parents to call my parents to say I got there okay."

"When did they start asking your friends' parents to call?"

"Well, I guess it was after that boy in Missouri got kidnapped riding his bike. Then I was an hour late coming back from Joe's."

"How does it make you feel to have to ask your friends' parents to call?"

"I feel like a baby, and I get so mad. Sometimes I just want to get away from everybody breathing down my neck."

At this point, I thought we were ready for an impact question.

"And if your parents continue to not trust you, then what happens?"

Steve gulped and took a sip of his iced tea. "I guess I might start lying to them or maybe run away or maybe get really mad and break something. But then I would be in really big trouble."

Next I asked some more questions to help Steve define what he wanted.

"How would you measure trust, Steve?"

"Measure trust?" Steve blinked. "You mean like give it a grade or a number?"

"If you felt your parents trusted you, what would that look like to you?"

Taking a deep breath, Steve said, "Well, my parents would trust me to say where I am going and when I'd be back home. And they wouldn't be checking up on me all the time."

"Have you tried to talk to your parents about how you feel they don't trust you?"

Looking away, Steve said, "No. They wouldn't listen."

I suggested to Steve that we role-play with me presenting his point of view and Steve acting as his parents. Later we reversed roles with Steve stating his case as I played his parents' part.

Afterwards Steve told me he thought he could talk to his parents without freaking out, and then he headed off in search of more pizza.

A few days later, our doorbell rang. Steve stood on the porch, smiling. "You don't have to call my parents. We're working on the trust thing."

[Kids Talk™](#) is a column dealing with early childhood development issues written by Maren Stark Schmidt. Mrs. Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over 25 years experience working with young children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale.