

It's All About Family!



Topic #17: Listening

I was struck by one of Dr. Bennett's lines in the show *Big Fish* when Will asks if Edward can hear them when he's on his death bed, and Dr. Bennett says, "Harder still to know if they're listening." That line got me thinking about how today's society is all about hearing without listening. We browse through Facebook posts, Instagrams, Snapchats, hearing people's ideas, but never actually listening to anyone. When people talk, we hear them, but we then dismiss what they say because we're too busy thinking about our own lives and ideas, and so we miss out on the value that other people's ideas could have in our lives.

Hearing requires ears, but listening requires effort. To listen, you have to engage with the idea being presented and even interact with the person who is speaking. In school, students ignore teacher instructions because they are not listening; relationships fall apart because the couple fails to communicate effectively - usually it's the listening part that's to blame.

The greatest ideas come from collaboration, healthy collaboration. You share an idea, I share an idea, and the new idea we create together is better than either of the original ideas. But this process can't work without listening. If we allow ourselves to become obsessed with our own ideas and thoughts, locking others out, we will become lonely, depressed, and disconnected.

Challenge #17: Listening

Pay attention to your interactions with people over the next week. Do you tend to hear people speak, allowing their words to go in one ear and out the other? Or do you take the time to actually listen, processing their words and engaging actively in the conversation. Try and discover the times you hear without listening. Then make an effort to engage in those moments rather than getting lost in your own thoughts. You will be surprised how much healthier your relationships will become, how much more successful you will be, and how many new ideas will come out of your interactions.