



## Habit Five: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.

Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood means that it is better to listen first and talk second. By taking the time to listen to another person, you reach a higher level of communication. Teaching Habit 5 to children is done by first considering their age and development. Many children find it difficult to understand another's point of view. This habit is best approached by introducing listening as a skill that should be practiced. Learning to listen without interrupting and learning to listen with your ears, your eyes, and your heart will help children build a foundation understanding and communicating with others. Simply put, we have two ears and one mouth so that we can spend more time listening with the intent to understand others.

### Activities to Try at Home:

1. To better understand how listening can help or hurt a relationship, try "pretend listening" with your child for a few minutes. Your child will be frustrated. Explain what you were doing and discuss how your child felt. Then, have your child ignore you when you are talking. Discuss how it makes you feel when you are ignored. Finish the conversation by thinking of ways to let the other person know when you feel that you are not being truly listened to. This is a great time to talk about how this is also an example of thinking win-win.
2. Body language can be even more powerful than words. Play a game with your kids where you each try to guess the other's emotion without using any words, just body language and facial expressions.
3. Model how saying the same phrase in a different tone of voice can give the phrase a completely different meaning. Try emphasizing different words in the phrase "I didn't say you did" and then have your child tell you how the meaning changed each time you said it differently.
4. Check out some of the following picture books at the library to use as a springboard for discussion about "seeking first to understand, then to be understood"
  - a. *Veronica Knows Best* by Nancy Robinson—Veronica learns that the best way to make friends is to take an interest in other people. She determines to test this theory on Kimberly Watson.
  - b. *Jamaica's Find* by Juanita Havill—Jamaica is a little girl who finds a stuffed toy at the park and wants to keep it very much. However, her guilt is growing as she thinks the toy may belong to another child.
  - c. *The Dragon Who Couldn't Breathe Fire* by Yonit Werber—The dragon who struggles to breathe fire tries many things to learn to breathe fire for the first time. After listening to the wise old owl, he learns what he really needs to do to breathe fire.
  - d. *Old Henry* by Joan Blos—The neighbors aren't too happy about Henry and his beat-up old house. Why doesn't he weed his garden and sweep his walk? Henry's got better things to do. Tired of being bothered, he gets fed up and moves away. The funny thing is, nobody's really happy when he does—not the neighbors and not Henry. This tale is a story of people learning how to get along.

