

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Shhh! Listening to the Silence*

**W**E CAN CULTIVATE GOOD LISTENING through teaching our children about quiet and engaging in fun activities that develop listening skills.

Play a game in which you and your child stand on opposite sides of the room and see if you can hear each other whisper. Take turns closing your eyes and identifying a soft sound like a broom sweeping or insects buzzing outside.

Show your child how to be a good listener by giving your full attention when she's talking – turn off your cell phone and ask other family members not to interrupt during a conversation. Reflect what you hear your child saying, and when you're trying to make a point, ask your child to repeat what you've said back for accuracy.

At school we sometimes ask children to “listen to the silence,” challenging them to be absolutely quiet for a short period of time.

When my children were young and they argued, I sometimes insisted we have five minutes of silence. This was especially effective when riding in the car. Instead of working out who started the fight or broke a rule, we simply tried not talking and found the silence brought rich rewards. Transgressions were forgotten. Happy thoughts emerged. After a while, when a conflict arose my children would often ask for silence.

In a world where so many sounds compete for our attention, learning how to find silence within ourselves is a vital resource. Quiet creates the capacities for concentrating on external tasks and on our own inner voice. Try taking time to hear the sound of special things or to listen together and create no sound at all. You and your family may discover a new form of refreshment.

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