



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Listen With Your Eyes

This brief Parent Tip is provided at no cost by United Services for Effective Parenting-Ohio, Inc. as a tool to assist parents, teachers, grandparents and all who help to care for and to raise our children. For more information on this and other tools from USEP-OHIO refer to the conclusion of this Parent Tip. Use this tip as a conversation starter.

Johnny grabbed his mother's cheeks and pulled her head around to face him as she greeted the other parents picking up their children at our school. Johnny had made a drawing he wanted her to see. He announced that he had made his best drawing yet. She absently murmured a response, "That's good, Johnny!" She carried on her conversation with another mom about the traffic jam going on between school and her office, and looked in her purse for a calendar to confirm the date for a parent meeting.

Johnny was more frustrated with her multitasking every minute. He cried out, "Mom, listen to me. Look at my picture!" When she assured him she liked it, and would talk with him soon, Johnny said, "**Mommy, Listen with your eyes!**"

He knew that her full attention was NOT on him, because her eyes were elsewhere, not on his picture or looking back into his eyes as he implored her to pay attention.

Today we frequently see tweens, teens and many adults looking constantly at their phones, iPods and other hand-held devices – not into the eyes of those they are walking with, eating with or even meeting with.

Teachers complain that the kids in their classes have difficulty listening and learning. They are distracted by so many things, and may never have learned to pay full attention throughout a conversation with an adult at home or school. Unfortunately if adults in their lives consistently give them attention divided by other distractions, they will repeat the behavior with others.

It is important that children learn to respect and wait for their turn for attention. But increasingly, I observe the people around me distracted to the point of inattention to any one thing or any needs of others. Johnny so eloquently stated it when he begged Mommy to, "Listen with your eyes".

We all see families out together all looking at screens in their hands. Why is it that whoever is in contact through the screen is more important than the people they are with?

Practice attention with the people in your life. Listen with your eyes! Tell your children, students and grandchildren how you feel when they are distracted and teach them to "Listen with their Eyes". Tell them Johnny's story. Talk with the kids about making some boundaries at home and school. Listen to their ideas and concerns too. Have conversations about what works for your family at home or school. Make some rules together that allow time for full attention to one another, when phones, games and other handhelds should be turned off.

Let us know what works for you and your family or students that we can share in our next Parent Tip or E-Update!

Email us with what works for you at cljfmckay@msn.com or usepohio@usepohio.com. Refer to Listen with your Eyes.

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