



# Listening Tips for Mentors

## Resisting the Urge to Fix Them

1. **Give full attention.** Show genuine interest and respect. Give affirmation and validation. Never act bored or distracted:  
*Excuse me, I was thinking of something else.* (More important than you)
2. **Match their tempo.** Don't rush or be afraid of silences. Kids don't like to be bombarded with irrelevant or probing interrogation:  
*Let's get to work, I have lot's of questions for you.* (Beware)
3. **Reflect back feelings.** Showing empathy conveys support and concern.  
*That must have been really difficult for you.*
4. **Paraphrase what is said.** They will know you are trying to understand.  
*Sounds like you thought nobody cared about what you wanted.*
5. **Ask to learn more.** Window words open an opportunity to explore for more information by following up on what a person has already said.  
*You mentioned 'lots of worries.' What is most difficult right now?*
6. **Encourage full expression.** Use open-ended questions instead of yes or no questions. *Why* triggers defensiveness. Show interest and curiosity:  
*Can you help me understand what you were thinking?*
7. **Avoid blaming.** Don't preach about what they "should" or "shouldn't" do.  
*Don't you think it would be better if ...?* (Shame, correction, advice.)
8. **Avoid detracting comments.** Don't dismiss or minimize their problems.  
*I know exactly what you are feeling.* (Impossible!)
9. **Respect personal space.** Respectful mentors blend empathy and objectivity which is difficult for involved parents. Don't force intimacy:  
*You can trust me, I'll never let you down.* (Words don't create trust.)
10. **Celebrate Survivor's Pride.** Validate acts of strength and resilience.  
*You showed real courage in facing and conquering that problem.*