

### **Activity for Statement #3 To Listen**

This activity is designed to introduce practical skills and perspectives for nurturing peace at home. It recognizes the third statement of the Family Pledge for Nonviolence as an effective tool for children, youth and adults to establish common patterns for peaceful living.

Preface this activity with the lead-in or gathering activity that is designed to introduce each statement of the Family Pledge for Nonviolence. If you are sharing this time with young children, you may wish to plan separate occasions to address each one of them.

#### **Supplies:**

- Bible
- Copies of the [Coloring Sheet for "Listen"](#)
- Narrow strips of paper
- Pens or pencils
- Crayons or markers

**Approximate time:** 20 minutes

#### **Leader's Notes:**

- Distribute copies of the coloring sheet and invite participants to color it while they are waiting for everyone to gather.
- Utilize the Lead-in or Gathering Activity to set the stage for this activity. Refer to Statement #3 to complete the phrase "Today, we seek to..." Then, display a copy of the coloring sheet for "Listen " and ask your participants to comment on the role that listening might play in peacemaking.
- Suggest that listening is the key to nurturing meaningful relationships. It indicates that a person honors the thoughts and feelings of the other person and is attentive to the way they choose to express them. Psalm 46:10 affirms the significance of listening. God directs us to "Be still and know that I am God." It is in our observance of others that we can fully honor and appreciate who they are and what they are about. Point out that the best way to observe another person is to give them your complete and undivided attention.
- Ask your participants to describe some of the things involved in really listening. Encourage them to describe some of the things they have learned through listening.
- Scan through the stories in the activity below and choose the one most appropriate for your family or small group. Then, identify some questions that might be helpful in facilitating a brief discussion.
- Record a few ideas of things that might be done to listen more effectively. Display them as you introduce the closing exercise.

#### **Activity: Listen! I Have a Story to Tell!**

Read or tell one of the following stories in your own words and use the questions to consider its meaning for your own lives.

### **Story # 1 (To be shared with families or groups with younger children)**

One day, some friends decided to play a board game together. As they set up the game, they realized that they all knew different directions for playing it. Emily volunteered to read the directions that were included with the game. Jeffrey said that he would listen to Emily read the directions. Jessica decided that she already knew the recommended way to play and offered to get them all a snack instead. When they began to play the game, they realized that Jessica's rules were different from the ones Jeffrey heard Emily read. They disagreed on almost everything they tried to do until they became so frustrated that they decided not to play the game at all.

Use the following questions as a guideline for discussion.

1. Do you think that it made a difference that Jeffrey listened to Emily read the directions for the game? Did it make a difference that Jessica chose not to listen to Emily read the directions?
2. Do you think it was important that Emily listened or paid attention to what she was reading or saying?
3. Have you ever had a similar experience with your friends or family?
4. Why do you think it's important to take time to listen to one another?

### **Story #2 (To be shared with families or groups with older children)**

Our son was seventeen and in high school when he came to us with the request to buy a motorcycle to ride to and from school. He promised to be careful and take good care of it, but our fears and concerns for his safety kept us from listening to him. We quickly said no!

Steve went away obviously upset and disappointed at our answer. A few days later he came back with a contract. In it he listed all the times when he had been careful and had lived up to his word. He also spelled out the conditions of the contract. He would buy the motorcycle himself, keep it in good condition, wear all the safety equipment, and ride only on certain streets back and forth to school. Further, the contract stated that if he did not do the things he promised, then he would sell the motorcycle immediately. Stunned by this unexpected presentation, we told him we would talk about it and get back to him.

We read and reread the contract and had to admit he had lived up to his word in the past. He was definitely a careful, responsible person and it was very likely he would live up to his contract. In spite of our fears about potential harm, we trusted Steve in this situation and said yes to his request. His contract helped us go beyond our initial fears and disagreement and listen to him, affirming him as the capable young man he was. (An excerpt from Families Creating Circles of Peace.)

Use the following questions as a guideline for discussion.

1. What would you have done if you were the parent? The child?
2. Are there times when you don't feel like your parent or your child is listening to you?
3. What are some things you wish others would do to show they are really listening to you?
4. What are some things you might be willing to do to let others know you are really listening to them? (You might wish to provide some examples for them to consider, e.g. turning off the computer or TV, putting down the paper, giving eye contact, make sure someone is done talking before you respond.)

### **Closing Exercise: I'd Like to Change My Ways.**

Distribute slips of paper along with writing utensils. Invite everyone to make note of one thing they would be willing to work on to listen more effectively. Encourage them to keep it in their pocket, purse, or on a mirror at home, etc. Close this activity by sharing a brief prayer along with the following Bible verse.

...let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger... James 1:19 NRSV