

## Listening - The Secret To Esteem

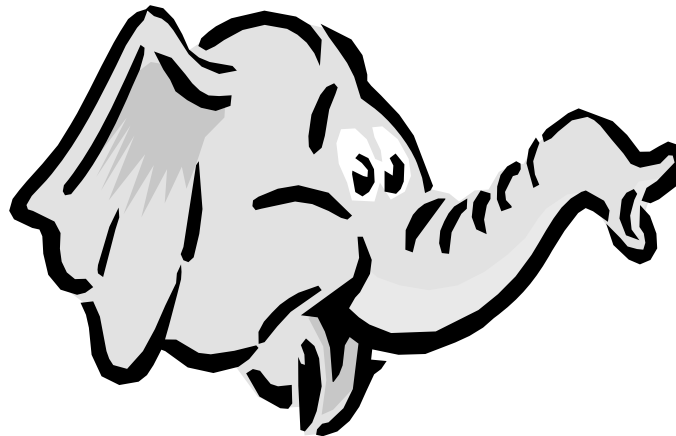
By Cheri DeMoss

**T**he secret to esteeming anyone, especially children, is to learn how to genuinely listen. Listening is a skill that focuses on understanding not responding. Most people believe that listening is simply hearing enough of what is said to jump in with our own ideas, opinions or reactions. We get busy thinking of an oppositional question or opinion which raises only our own self-esteem. While completely ignoring the fact that our child is talking to feel esteemed by sharing a part of themselves with us.

The purpose of listening, very much like the purpose of reading, is to understand someone who isn't you. Most of us have been taught to listen through skewed filters that are subjective. Real understanding comes from learning how to listen objectively. Listen not to confirm your inner world but to understand your child's.

**Show your understanding** by mirroring back the feelings behind your child's words. Doing this keeps you focused on what feelings your child is trying to share.

Use present tense when reflecting back your



*Children light up immediately when they are being heard and understood. Listening to a child esteems them and let's them know you like them and that they have value .*

child's feelings. Sentences like: "That's unfair that he took the ball away from you" or "It feels awful to get yelled at in class" shows that you Get It. Empathy is truly understanding what someone else is telling you they feel. Talking in present tense proves your understanding.

***The purpose of listening is to understand someone who isn't you.***

## Parenting Classes

**It's Not About Being Perfect  
It's About Being Aware**

**P**arenting is a tough job because no one teaches us what healthy parenting looks like. We either parent from the way we were parented or we vow to do the exact opposite of how we were raised.

Healthy, effective parenting is about recognizing our child's behaviors, understanding what they mean & knowing what to do. It's a combination of nurturing, supporting and awareness.

These things weren't role-

modeled when we were small so it's difficult to know how to do them when we become parents.

Our classes help you learn healthy & effective parenting styles in a supportive & esteeming environment. You'll learn how to raise your child's esteem and eliminate power struggles. With new skills and information you'll become a more confident, successful parent.

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**Don't give advice.** Most parents think advice makes their child feel better. But think about it.

Let's pretend you come home from school feeling really powerless & upset because the boy on the playground took the ball away from you when it was your turn. You tell your parent who responds by saying, "Next time you need to stand your ground and just tell him it's your turn. Don't let him treat you that way."

Do you feel better now that you know what you could have or should have done? Of course you don't. No one ever feels better being told what we should've or could've done differently. Especially in the middle of

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Inside...**

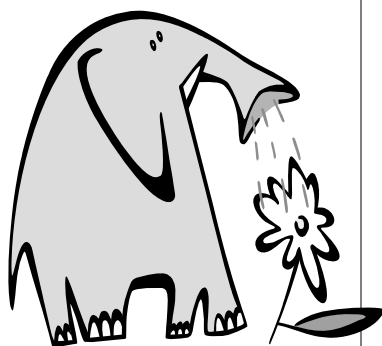
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# Listening - The Secret To Esteem

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feeling bad about something that happened to us. We don't feel understood - we feel scolded and corrected.

Giving advice to your child, or anyone, elevates your esteem while diminishing your child's.



**Being distracted or interrupting** is like giving advice. It sucks the esteem right out of your child.

Don't watch TV or read a magazine when your child is talking. People, especially children, can tell you're not really listening. Eventually, as they get older, they will simply stop trying to share their world with you.

Interrupting your child, or anyone, is about you not being able to handle your own internal reactions. If what you're going to say by interrupting will make your child feel supported and understood. Then your child will feel just as supported and understood if you wait until they have finished talking.

Interrupting is completely about the person doing the interrupting and has nothing to do with the person, or child, talking. Interrupt-

ing is a completely dominating, self-absorbed behavior.

**If you're bored** then you are not really understanding the feelings behind the words. It's a fact of human nature that when someone is talking about their feelings other human beings are riveted. So if you're bored you're most likely not hearing or understanding your child's feelings.

**Eliminate your need to ask questions** by getting good at reflecting the emotional content of what your child is sharing. It cannot be highlighted enough that most questions we ask someone, especially a child, are diminishing. Things like: "Why were you so upset?" When they just told you what happened makes the child feel even

more alone.

Listening is like using a walkie-talkie. The person talking keeps their finger on the talk button and the person listening keeps their finger off the talk button. This is never more important than when talking with your child.

Remember, how you talk to your child is, not only how they will learn to talk to others, but how they will learn to expect others to talk to them.

Teach your child to think of healthy communication and genuine listening as normal. This will determine the kind of people they surround themselves with as adults and the kind of person they chose for a partner.

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## 20/20 HINDSIGHT

The wonderful thing about hindsight is that you can use it to role-model accountability with your child. Since it's virtually impossible for a parents to be aware of all effects their behaviors & words have had on their child, being able to reflect back on it later is an invaluable tool.

Being a parent is not about being perfect - it's about being aware. The fast pace of parenting makes it hard to always be on top of the things in the moment.

You can make good use of hindsight by talking over power struggles, temper flare ups & other interactions with your child. Part of esteeming your child is you role-modeling accountability for words & actions that were unfair.

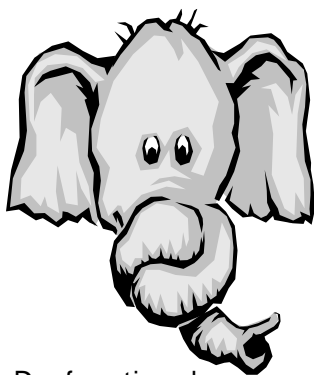
## Do You Esteem Your Child?

	Always	Sometimes	Seldom
Do you look for ways to catch your child "getting it right"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you excited to hear about your child's day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you irritated when you child does things differently than you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you say or do things that make your child feel bad about themselves?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you act like what your child says doesn't matter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you fascinated by watching your child at play?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand why our child does most things?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you talk over or interrupt yor child when they are talking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you accountable for your behaviors when you lose your temper or are unfair?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Dysfunctional Parenting Behaviors

By Cheri DeMoss

**D**ysfunctional parents give us inaccurate guidance – they don't teach us the ropes (of life). When we go out into the world they blame us for what we don't know & for the mistakes that we make. These parents act as if they have had no part in who we become.



Dysfunctional parenting behaviors create a confusion of feelings in their child. These “crazy-making” behaviors block their child's ability to emotionally breathe easily.

Most of our parents train us to focus on their good intentions. Yet it is not our parent's intentions that cause us to feel bad about who we are & what we do feel & do - but the actual behaviors they did while raising us.

Listed below are some basic dysfunctional parenting behaviors to help you tell the difference between their behaviors & their Intentions.

## **Dysfunctional Parents:**

**Say and Do Things That Do Not Esteem** their child. By pointing out what is wrong with the child they cause their child to feel ashamed of themselves.

This teaches the child that those closest to them will hurt them. These parents believe it is for the “good” of the child. In reality, it raises the parent's esteem while making the child feel self-conscious, ashamed and bad about who they are.

**Are Emotional Dishonest.** They don't discuss or acknowledge the emotional reality around them. Denial is the most easily recognized sign of this. These parents acts as if something is other than what it is.

**Do Distrustful Behavior** such as breaking promises, hitting, being inconsistent, or blatantly lying to or physically overpowering the child. Saying to the child, “Come here I won't hurt you,” & then hitting them. Showing the child time & again that

the parents can't be trusted teaches the child to be suspicious & frightened in the world.

**Ask Set Up Questions.** This shames the child. “How could you do that?” “What are you stupid?” “What's your problem?” There is no right answer or no answer that will be acceptable.

**Set up questions set the child up to be and feel wrong.**

**Ignore The Child.** “The cold shoulder treatment” in any form causes the child to feel scared & anxious. It convinces the child that they are unlikely, alone & bad.

**Act Like What The Child Says, Does, Or Feels Doesn't Matter.** Giving their child the feeling that

no matter what they do they are bad. These parents do this to each other & then do it to the children.

**Directly Negate The Child** by giving the message that to be different than the parents makes their child a bad person. This teaches their child to be dependent instead of independent.

**Enmesh With The Child & Call It Bonding.** Bonding is when there is a healthy bridge between parent & child. The energy goes from parent to child. Enmeshment is when the child is made to focus on the parent's needs because the parents don't know how to meet their own needs.

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## About Cheri DeMoss -

**C**heri DeMoss is Founder and Director of **EMPOWERING OPTIONS®**, an organization specializing in personal empowerment. For the past 17 years Cheri has been teaching others how to turn obstacles into options. Cheri's warm, innovative approach focuses on how learned shame and dysfunctional beliefs from childhood dictate our behaviors as adults. She creates a shame-free, completely supportive and positive environment where you can easily understand and explore the behavior patterns and ideas that no longer serve you.

In addition to working with individuals, groups and couples **EMPOWERING OPTIONS®** offers seminars, workshops, CD's, newsletters, and uniquely effective classes for couples. Cheri provides a safe, encouraging environment for clients to understand how these patterns shape our experiences in relationships, work situations, and our own self-esteem. She provides information, validation, and ideas that make it easier to create the changes you want.

Cheri maintains a private practice, as well as designs, produces and presents **EMPOWERING OPTIONS® Empower By Example** seminar series. Cheri also provides in-service training for school districts, and customizes workshops, classes & training seminars for mental health professionals and local communities. She provides consultation for a wide variety of businesses and presents at national and state conferences. Cheri and her associates conduct a full time private practice in Chicago.

The more information, the easier it is to see the options in our lives. Raising our esteem helps us feel safe in the world and reach our goals. For more information about relationships, parenting, new ideas, behaviors and options go to [www.EmpoweringOptions.com](http://www.EmpoweringOptions.com)

# The Family Chips System

If your child is having a lot of difficulty following family rules you can use the "Family Chip System." This can be an effective tool. **When used consistently**, most children will show great improvement within just a few weeks. **The key is consistency.** The program provides immediate reward for appropriate behavior & immediate consequences for inappropriate behavior. Include the whole family in the designing process & have all children participant in the program together. Children & parents like this system because it's inclusive of everyone, raises self-esteem, is fun & creative. Here's how to use the program:

**Purchase** a box of poker chips from the drug store.

**Hold a family meeting** to discuss the reason for the program. Tell the children that it will help them to learn to be in charge of themselves. Explain to your children that this system is similar to what adults experience: Adults earn money for working. Adults have to pay fines for breaking rules like speeding or make a late payment. Adults spend their money on things they need as well as a few things they want.

**Develop a list** of behaviors they will earn chips for. Start with the morning & then go throughout the day **looking for behaviors to reward.** These can include

positive behaviors, self-help behaviors & chores. If you are using a behavior modification program for school you can give them chips for each point earned on that system, also. Some ideas are: getting up on time, brushing teeth, getting ready for school on time, playing nicely siblings or friends, completing chores such as feeding a pet or taking out the trash, doing things the first time they are asked, doing homework without a fuss, getting ready for bed on time, going to bed on time, cleaning bedroom.

**Agree on a list of behaviors** that result in a loss of chips. These can include behaviors that are oppositional, defiant or disruptive. Some examples are: tantrums, yelling, screaming, hitting, fighting, throwing things, jumping on the furniture, getting up after bed time, swearing, putting others down. (Some more serious behaviors will receive a *Time Out* as well as a fine).

**Agree on a list of privileges** they will earn & pay for with chips. Some privileges will be bought for the day; others will be bought for a period of time (usually 1/2 hour). These can include: watching TV, playing outside, computer time, renting their bike or other large toys, playing a

game with a parent, etc.

**Assign point values** to each item on the list. See the sample below:

**Earn Chips For:**

Making the Bed = 2 chips  
Brushing Teeth = 2 chips  
Setting Table = 4 chips

**Lose Chips For:**

Interrupting = 2 chips  
Hitting = 4 chips + time out  
Spitting = 2 chips

**Spend Chips For:**

Going to a movie = 5 chips  
Watching TV = 5 chips  
Sleep over = 3 chips

**When Parents Give Chips:**

Be within a few feet of your child. Look at your child & smile. Use a pleasant tone of voice. Make sure you & your child are facing one another. Catch your child getting it right "Hey, that was great. You're really doing a nice job. That's really helping." Reward your child with chips "Here's 2 chips for doing such a great job."

**When Parents Take Away Chips:**

Be near your child. Look at your child & smile. Use a pleasant tone of voice. Make sure you & your child are facing one another. Explain why they are losing chips without giving the message the child is bad. "Remember you're not allowed to run-in the house because it's not safe." Be sympathetic. "I know it's hard to lose

chips."

Allow your child space to be upset for the consequences of their actions. Gentle reminders like: "We made a deal." Will help keep them focused. If your child is too mad or upset to give you the chips, don't force the issue. Place the child in time out so they can calm down & then have them give you the chips. If your child takes a chip loss very well it's a good idea to give them back a chip or two for being a good sport.

Post the list of behaviors & chips earned in a convenient place. Let your child decorate a paper cup in which to keep their chips. Keep the "bank's chips out of the reach of children. Sometimes point values need to be raised or lowered & items need to be added or removed. Modify the game at anytime by holding a family meeting.

As with any tool of health like brushing your teeth or taking your vitamins **consistency is they key.** Implement this system with no power struggles, no shaming, no putdowns. **The success or failure of this system depends completely on the parent's ability to be consistent** in following the program the family designed.

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