

**Listening Skills**

**Best Practices**

As a caring adult who supports youth, 4-H volunteers play a very important role. The following are some best practices to follow when talking and interacting with youth.

“**WE HAVE TWO EARS AND ONE MOUTH SO WE CAN LISTEN TWICE AS MUCH AS WE SPEAK.*”*** *(Epictetus AD55-c135)*

1. **State your intention to listen:**

* *“I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING YOUR VIEWS”*

1. **Manage your physical environment:**

* *REDUCE DISTRACTIONS (NOISE AND DISRUPTIONS)*
* *IGNORE FLAWS IN THE SPEAKER’S DELIVERY (LIKE NERVOUS GESTURES)*

1. **Make an internal commitment to listen**:

* *BE OPEN TO HEARING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES*
* *DON’T JUDGE*
* *MAKE MENTAL SUMMARIES ABOUT WHAT IS SAID*

1. **Assume a listening posture:**

* *MAKE EYE CONTACT*
* *USE APPROPRIATE BODY LANGUAGE*
* *USE MINIMAL ENCOURAGERS (EX.- “UH HUH”)*
* *ALLOW FOR SILENCE*

1. **Participate actively in the listening process:**

* *INVITE THE SPEAKER TO SAY MORE*
* *PARAPHRASE TO CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING*
* *ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS*
* *TAKE NOTES*
* *WORK TO UNDERSTAND THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SPEAKER WITH A STATEMENT OF RESPECT FOR THE SPEAKER’S VIEWS*