

True Points

A newsletter for the parents of student leaders

Volume 1 Issue 2

February/March,
2005

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Listen with your heart

One of the biggest causes of frustration and disruption between parents and teenagers is ineffective or inappropriate listening skills.

National surveys of both parents and teens indicate that the primary cause of disagreement is a lack of listening. Both parents and teens agree that the other is not listening!

Listening is actually a full set of skills. It is not simply a biological trait. Human beings need to learn how to listen. Honing those listening skills can change dysfunctional family habits into healthy situations.

Extension Family Life Specialist Herbert G. Lingren ("Tune In to Your Teen," University of Nebraska-Lincoln) recommends that parents and

teenagers practice the following together—in advance of potential disagreements—to strengthen family members' empathy and understanding of each other:

- Pay attention, look directly at the person speaking, and don't interrupt.
- Don't judge the person's comments—be accepting.
- Listen for what the person isn't saying. Pay attention to hesitancy, tone of voice, and nonverbal communication.
- Resist letting your emotional reactions dictate your listening efficiency.
- Set aside specific times to discuss family matters in a physically and psychologically

safe environment.

Practice does not make perfect. Practice makes permanent. It takes perfect practice to make perfect—or so advised one of my old baseball coaches. The point is that listening is an essential leadership skill and an essential life skill.

Good listening skills equal good grades. Better listening skills equal better grades, and so on.

Boosting Self Esteem

Low self-esteem can cause your teenager to struggle with relationships, impair studying habits, spark serious emotional stress, and increase vulnerability to drug use. Encourage your teenager to overcome his or her low self-esteem with three simple steps from the University of Texas at Austin's Counseling and Mental Health Center:

- **Step 1: Rebut the inner critic.** Try putting a positive spin on negative messages. Challenge yourself to see the positive side.
- **Step 2: Practice self-nurturing.** Stay healthy, have fun, reward your accomplishments, remind yourself of your achievements, and forgive yourself

for your shortcomings.

- **Step 3: Get help.** Turn to friends, teachers, counselors, parents, or your pastor if your low self-esteem persists.

Bystanders no longer

Join us. Help SLTP to grow and thrive. Become part of the action. We need help getting the word out .

What can you do?

Here are some direct action suggestions:

1. Join the Presentation Teams at SLTP information tables at various conferences.
2. Join the Welcome Wagon team for our summer conferences to meet and greet the parents dropping off their kids.
3. Join the Facilitation Teams for

one or all of the Parent Orientation Programs at the closing of this summer's conferences.

4. Join the Fundraising Teams to seek out in-kind donations from local businesses.
5. Join the Phone Calling Teams to call schools and secure information.
6. Join the Recruiting Teams to present to parent groups.
7. Join the Connections theatrical troupe to present or help stage on of our traveling productions.

8. Become a member of our teaching staff.
9. Make a presentation about SLTP to the principal at your community high school, or in a neighboring community.

Explore the SLTP Home pages. Become familiar with our "wish list."

Food fads

For preteens, deciding what to eat is part of the process of figuring out who they are, so it's not uncommon for them to develop unusual eating habits, such as caffeine cravings, unhealthy diets, and food obsessions. In "Weird Eating Habits" (Parents Magazine, www.parents.com), Joanna Powell offers suggestions for parents who are concerned about their preteens' dietary patterns:

Ride it out—Don't create power struggles around food choices. Most food fads will fade out if you allow your preteen to work through the phase on his or her own.

Be a good role model—Be aware of the messages you're sending kids with your own diet and attitude toward your body.

Make healthy foods avail-

able—Keep offering a variety of nutritious meals, and give preteens the opportunity to help with food preparation.

www.sltp.info

At our newly expanded and refurbished website, you'll find a whole section devoted to the parents of student leaders. The section includes resource pages, descriptions of the services we

provide and hints to help support student leadership.

All the new applications and information about the entire range of our program offerings for 2005 can be found there as well.

If you have any suggestions for things to include—please do not hesitate to send those along to: info@sltp.info

Conference Profile–ALC

The ALC's are crucibles of leadership. There is a special intensity in this incredible experience. The ALC is for the serious leadership student. The student who understands the role leaders play. The student who knows how to make a difference. The student who wants to take their skills to the next level. The student who has learned that he / she needs to learn MORE.

The ALC curriculum is complex and the expectations of achievement are high which is exactly what should take place in a program titled ADVANCED !

Strong bonds are established

between staff and students - a week of teaching and learning together leads to those kinds of bonds. The approach to the curriculum is of course experiential and the cooperative learning exercises allow each student to both teach and learn.

What makes the curriculum so advanced? Well, it takes off where the LTC program left off. The subjects include: motivation; conflict resolution; group dynamics; change; initiative; delegation; and more. But the real advancement comes from the participants. The energy level of the ALC's is always through the roof. And it needs to be.

There needs to be a lot of energy because even more is packed into the program than was packed in for LTC—and ALC is a half day shorter!

The sense of fulfillment and accomplishment that ALC graduates feel is absolutely off the scale. That pride comes from learning and achieving together. It comes from the special ALC DifferenceMaker Projects. It comes from working with the staff so closely. It comes from inside.

Summer Conferences

Registrations for all our summer conferences are underway in earnest! There are just over 20 weeks to go before our summer conferences kick off. All of the applications are available on line as pdf files at

www.sltp.info

OTS

There is one session which is open to all forms of officer teams – from full cabi-

nets to co-captains – from clubs to classes to student government. (The team requirement is that there must be at least a pair of officers)

July 1-2

LTC

There are four sessions. Although there are just over 110 slots available at this point.

July 5-9;

July 12-16;

ALC

There are three sessions and approximately 38 slots available.

July 13-16;

July 27-30;

and Aug 3-6

TLC

There is only one session and there are 3 slots left.

July 6-9

Adviser Certification

There is only one session and there are 10 slots left.

July 27-30

The DifferenceMaker Showcase

The *DifferenceMaker Showcase* is a very special conference. We believe that service should not be a “have to.” Service should be a “get to.” Service is leadership in action. This conference is about expanding service opportunities, learning how to stage particular events and exploring the possibilities for service inside and outside of school. There will be separate workshop tracks for

teachers, parents and students.

Held on a Sunday afternoon at Nichols, we will bring together all manner of experts to present workshops and to showcase the opportunities to make differences.

Additionally at the Showcase SLTP will award students for their participation in community service and personal development. For information on these awards visit our website.

So mark your calendar now – reserve the date. Bring your friends for a spectacular spring afternoon. It's **Sunday, April 3.**

A Registration form can be found on page 6.

Computers continue to become more and more prevalent in our lives. For student leaders, they can provide valuable tools for organizing, communicating, researching, and more. Computers are supposed to help us and save valuable time, but when things go wrong any productivity gains can quickly be lost. This series is designed to help keep your computers up and running, in order to help keep you up and running.

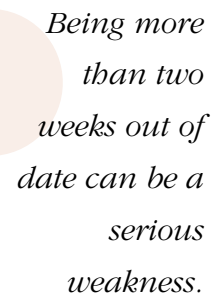
When it comes to protecting your computer from Viruses and other threats, there is a lot of bad advice out there, and even more misinformation. There is no such thing as perfect protection, but using many approaches can help keep you safe.

First and foremost, you need to have a good Antivirus program. It must be one that is constantly protecting you and

can automatically update itself when you are online. In June 2004, PC World magazine tested a number of leading programs. They found McAfee VirusScan to be the most effective but a little difficult to use; Norton AntiVirus to be almost as effective and a little easier to use; and PC-cillin (from Trend Micro) to be sufficiently effective, and very easy to use (also the only one to offer free telephone tech support). PC-cillin also costs less than its main competitors. In my personal experience, McAfee works great on Windows XP, but has problems with other operating systems, Norton is effective, but does things that I don't want it to do. I haven't used PC-cillin, but other software from Trend Micro has been effective and easy to use. I know a lot of Macintosh users that think they are immune to viruses, and they couldn't be more wrong—this is software that everyone needs.

Now having Anti-virus software is not enough, you must keep it updated with the latest Virus Definitions. Most companies require you to renew your subscription with them each year in order to get these updates. It is absolutely critical that you do this—most companies release new virus definitions at least once a week, so being more than two weeks out of date can be a serious weakness.

For more information, see <http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,115939,00.asp>



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Sex, drugs and alcohol

How can you defend your teenagers against three things parents fear most—sex, drugs, and alcohol? Lois Leiderman Davitz and Joel Davitz offer these active-parenting tips in *Parenting Teenagers* (Paulist Press):

Teach Impulse Control—It's important to teach your teenagers that the price for immediate pleasure is often self-destruction. Be sure they understand the importance of resisting harmful habits.

Be Direct and Honest—Sensitive issues can be un-

comfortable to talk about. Gain respect from your teenager by overcoming your discomfort and relaying your message loud and clear in a forthright manner.

Explain Your Decisions—Explain that your strictness doesn't come from anger but from love and general concern. Be sure your teenager fully understands your strong position.

Be Firm—A “wait and see” attitude won't work. Don't just hope for a turnaround if your teenager engages in life-

threatening behavior. Take a firm, uncompromising position. The possibilities for self-destruction are too great to risk a softened approach.

Doctor shopping

As your teenager outgrows his or her pediatrician, you can use the chance for “doctor shopping” to strengthen your family bond. Eric Metcalf, in a Better Homes and Gardens article (www.bhg.com), “Helping Your Teen Pick a Doctor,” gives suggestions that may ease otherwise sensitive and sometimes embarrassing health issues:

- Find a physician who’s sensitive to teenage issues, such as puberty and eating disorders. Be sure he or she can offer good guidance for a healthy daily life.
- Do your homework to find a well-recommended doctor. Ask your teenager to ask his or her friends about their doctors. Consult your school nurse or other parents.
- Arrange a meeting with the doctor you’ve selected. Ask probing questions and observe how the doctor interacts with your teenager.

Teaching Self Control

Yelling is a common pitfall in many parent/teenager conflicts. My Dad who was a union organizer and who personally loved arguments and debates – never yelled. As a teenager who yelled a lot, I have to admit that this frustrated the hell out of me. He explained to me that his responsibility to me included understanding that his words were already bigger, so yelling was out of the question. To be honest, I did not understand that until I was designing a course in conflict management.

Most times the scene goes like this: the teenager yells, the parent yells, and the exchange gets louder until someone walks out, leaving everyone feeling angry and helpless.

Michael Josephson, Val Peter, and Tom Dowd, in *Parenting to Build Character in Your Teen* (Boys Town Press) offer two quick steps to teach teenagers self-

control and help your family resolve conflicts together:

Calming Down—Describe your teenager’s problem behavior to him or her, give clear instructions on what he or she needs to do to calm down, and then allow time for calming down. For example, “Matt, you’re yelling at me and pacing around the room. Take a few deep breaths and try to settle down.”

Follow-Up Teaching—Describe to your teenager how he or she should behave next time. For example, “Instead of shouting, why don’t you ask me if you can sit on the porch until you’re ready to talk about it?” It’s also crucial to include an appropriate negative consequence so your teenager learns that yelling isn’t the way to get what he or she wants. Consequences help change behavior.

The key to teaching self-control is in delivery. Be sure to talk slowly and softly, and with empathy. Don’t get sidetracked with other issues, control your emotions, and include a “cool down” time for yourself.

He explained that it was his responsibility included understanding that his words were bigger than mine.

