

YOU GO GIRL PRINCIPLE 2:

LISTEN TO HER

Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

~Stephen Covey

Listen to her

### **HOW?**

#### **How should I listen to my daughter?**

1. Practice empathic listening—hear with your heart.
2. Respect her by answering her questions. It makes her world a lot clearer when you do. If you want your daughter to respect you, you need to respect her.
3. Listen with your eyes.

I always say *listen to them with both eyes and see them with both ears*. Listening involves seeing just as much as hearing. When you listen with half an ear, it usually means that you are concentrating on something else and not looking at your daughter.

When you look at her **three empowering things happen**.

- First, you have to stop what you are doing so that your full attention is directed at her. That makes her feel important and empowered.
- Second, eye contact with her helps you fix your thoughts on her and what she has to tell you. It makes her feel once again that she is worthwhile and important.
- Third, you're able to read her body language and facial expressions which will help you understand anything that lies behind the words—which is usually *everything*.

### **THINK EMPOWERED**

*It's important that you talk so your daughter will listen, and listen so your daughter will talk to you.* Putting it into practice is harder than it sounds. In principle #2 the leading question should be: Am I saying or doing things in a way that would make my daughter the most receptive to **listening** to what I have to say and learning from me?

**Think:** Would I want anyone to speak to me in the way I'm speaking to my daughter? For a variety of reasons, even well-intentioned mothers or parents communicate in a way that at best offers little chance of nurturing an empowered mindset and worse—it chips away at a girl's self-esteem.

As our daughters grow, they experience thousands upon thousands of verbal and non-verbal communication from parents, teachers, other adults, siblings and peers. How we hear and respond to them is critical in the process of fostering an empowered mindset—which is *what she believes about herself, what she believes about others and what she believes about the world.*

If we have a clear understanding of the major components of the mindset of empowered girls, then every interaction with our girl can be a step toward helping her believe she can positively handle what comes her way. When parents or teachers don't listen properly—or at all—they are saying, in effect, that they and their business are more important than their daughter. If a girl is ignored, she will feel insignificant and undermined. She will not feel comfortable with herself and her self-esteem cannot possibly flourish.

**Think:** "I listen to understand, I speak to be understood." We can use our communication with our daughter to model and reinforce such qualities of empowerment as empathy, hope, optimism, problem-solving ability, reflection, coping ability, interpersonal growth, self-worth, appropriate risk-taking and a sense of control or ownership over one's life. Effective, powerful,

connected communication is the foundation for developing and strengthening all of these qualities.

### **IT STARTS WITH YOU**

The greatest respect we can show someone is to really truly listen to them *empathically*, to try to understand things from their perspective. We always have to *listen with our hearts*.

The first rule of communicating effectively with your daughter or anyone else is to “*Seek first to understand, and then to be understood.*” Seek first to understand your daughter before you can expect her to understand you. Basically this statement is true because *people don't really care what you know until they know that you care.*

For a child, being listened to means being understood and this makes her feel worthwhile. “Understanding” doesn't necessarily mean you agree with your daughter's opinions and ideas, but that she has a chance to be heard. It conveys the message where your daughter will think: “My opinions and ideas matter. I matter. Mom cares about me.”

It's been said that a child's favorite parent is the one who has a listening heart. *Unfortunately we often interrogate our children rather than listen to them.* In a very real sense we decide what the conversation is going to cover. When we restrict our conversations, we close out the possibility of real conversation.

It takes time and effort to understand others, especially little girls, especially children. Sometimes we don't have all day to sit and listen, but in fact, it takes far more time to deal with misunderstandings and hurt feelings. When we take time to stay with the listening process until our daughter feels we have understood, we have communicated many things—that we want to

understand, that we care, we respect her feelings, we value her friendship and we value our relationship.

Our children, our marriage partners, our business associates spend a great deal of time, effort and energy fighting for acceptance from us, for being respected and for a sense of their own worth. When we grant them this by sincerely seeking to understand and listen to them, we find that almost all of their struggles will cease.

Remember that *we want to influence our daughters and want to inspire their good behavior*. We don't want to instill unhealthy fear in them. You can influence or persuade your daughter only to the extent that she feels you understand and appreciate her. You have to show that you're seeking to understand, that you're really trying.

While your child is talking, you have to really do this—**keep quiet and listen** when she's talking to you *without waiting for your turn to talk*. If you are waiting to respond, you are not really listening because subconsciously you believe that what you have to say is important. You may give her the impression, "Are you done yet? Are you done yet? Can I go now?"

This is the time to rise above your own references and try to see things through hers. Think back to when you were young and ask: "What would I have wanted?" "How would I have wanted someone to respond to me?"

#### **GROUND RULES to EMPATHIC LISTENING:**

##### **WHAT IS EMPATHIC LISTENING?**

##### **DEFINE EMPATHIC LISTENING**

1. Show empathy when you are listening, to show that you really want to understand. You are listening so your child will talk. You are listening with your eyes and heart to her feelings and to her words, not just with your ears. You want to see the world as someone who cares.

Comment [SMM1]: Do you need these here?

2. The attitude of “I want to understand you” is enormously attractive because it keeps you open and your child feels that you can be influenced. What she says has a chance of being heard and considered. Remember, the key to having influence with your daughter is her perceiving that she has influence with you.
3. Be authentic. After seeking to understand your daughter’s point of view, ask if you can express how you feel about the situation. Ask, “Would you like to hear my opinion? Would you like to know what I think?”
4. Limit “You” messages because your daughter can go into defense mode and all communication can stop. If you ask things like: “Why are you so insensitive? Why are you so stubborn? Why in the world did you do that?” chances are that your daughter will feel under attack. Also, avoid jumping in with how you would have handled the situation or resolved it if you were her.

Instead, tune into what you’re feeling and then express it simply. Own your words. Give “I” messages like “In my opinion” or “I feel like this.” In this way, you personalize it and she should not feel attacked.

## **WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**

### **SCENARIO 1:**

There was this one mother in my mother/daughter empowerment sessions having trouble communicating with her daughter. She said, “My 17-year-old daughter is just so moody. I know she’s really bothered about something, but when I ask her what’s wrong, she just shrugs her shoulders and says, “You wouldn’t understand.” She just won’t open up to me. I’ve told her over and over again what she has to do but she’s not listening.”

The conversation between mother and daughter usually went like this: Daughter said, “There’s nothing fun to do. I feel so bored all the time. My friends are the same girls I’ve known since first grade—and besides they all have a boyfriends. I don’t have a boyfriend. None of the boys want to go out with me. I’m tired of hanging around and being the only girl without a date. I feel dumb being with my friends when they are in couples and I’m single.”

**Mother's Disempowering Reaction:**

I encouraged the mother to try first to understand her daughter to try first to have her daughter seek her advice. Before I could say another word she said, “Oh, I understand her all right. She needs to appreciate all the things I do for her.”

Well, the situation got worse—and why wouldn't it with an attitude like that? She tried different things, including clichés like: “You just have to hang in there” or “Those guys don't know what they're missing by not going out with a great girl like you.” But all her efforts were not working. She complained and said, “I've told my daughter over and over what to do, but she doesn't listen.” *Who was really not listening? Was it the daughter who wasn't listening...or the mother?*

**Daughter's Interpretation:**

Mom doesn't want to talk to me or listen to what I have to say. She assumes she knows what I'm going through.

**Mother's Empowering Reaction:**

Mom finally decided she had to try something dramatic or she would lose her daughter to silence forever. She sat down with her daughter and invited her to talk. When appropriate, the mother would look at her with an expression that showed that she was honestly trying to understand what the girl was saying and would repeat what she was saying to make sure that she understood.

Her mother looked at her and thought, “What is her real need here? She's feeling like no boys like her. Let's get to the real issue.” She asked, “Do you really think that no boys want to go out with you?”

Daughter says, “Yeah. I've asked Tony, Mark and Caesar and they all said no. I don't want to keep asking. I must be a geek.”

*A geek?* The mother thinks. *My daughter?* But she says nothing along those lines.

Instead the mother says, “You feel that because these guys turned you down you’d be making a fool out of yourself to ask any other guy?”

“Yeah, that’s it,” daughter says. “I should get the message already. No one wants to go out with me and I’m not going to keep asking just to get turned down.”

The mother reflects on the feelings she hears coming from her daughter. It’s not only the lack of boyfriends bothering her, but it’s making a fool of herself or looking silly by continuing to ask. The mother says, “It hurts when boys say no. I understand that sort of hurt, having been single myself once.” She gives her daughter a hug and encourages her to keep on talking.

The daughter was able to bring her fears out into the open, to discuss them with her mother—who was very careful to be understanding and not ridiculing or patronizing. By taking the time to listen, the mother established a new kind of bond with her daughter.

After talking for quite awhile, the girl began to realize that maybe things weren’t as bad as she had felt. That maybe not going out with these guys wasn’t the end of the world. As the conversation progressed, she opened up even more and *got to the heart of her real fears*. That *maybe she was not worth loving*. That no one—especially an attractive guy—would find her appealing and loveable.

The mother was able to *reassure her daughter that those feelings and fears were natural* and she reminded her of all the real friends she had—including guys. The mother sensed that her daughter didn’t want a sentimental and mushy “but-I-love-you-my-daughter” scene. She showed her love simply by caring, listening and being there when she was needed. The daughter felt that love and went away feeling much better about herself.

## **SCENARIO 2**

A mother might be guilty of practicing this guilt defense mechanism with her child. Perhaps you feel uncomfortable about the lack of time you are able to spend with your daughter and become defensive with her. Whatever she says or does may take potential quality time away from you.

**Teen Tina** simply says: “I’m going over to Randy’s for dinner tonight. We might watch movies afterwards.”

**Mother’s Disempowering Reaction:**

Guilt rears its ugly head. They only have so much time together on the weekends and by the time she gets home from work, it’s late. She can’t seem to juggle all that’s on her plate and still be **Super Mom**. She takes her daughter’s comment as if she would rather spend time with someone else rather than with her. Instead of talking about fears, mama can’t help herself. She attacks with her words and attitude.

**Mad Mama:** “Since when do you tell me and not ask me what you’re going to do? And why can’t you watch videos here with the family? You owe me some time, you know.”

It’s important to listen without interpreting every comment as an attack on you. Unfortunately *many of us feel we are not as good a parent as we’d like to be* and thus take every comment as an implied criticism. When you’re listening to your child, focus on what she is saying. Leave your own self-justification out of it. You can lose a lot of what your daughter is trying to tell you if you are instead concentrating on building a defense.

Reacting in such a way will set up a wide variety of negative impact emotions in your daughter, running from guilt to feeling like a “bad” daughter to second guessing herself and her intentions.

**Daughter’s Interpretation:**

What she said and how she said it didn't matter. You were already in defense mode. Her intentions, however innocent or naïve, are shot down. She will shut down.

**Mother's Empowering Reaction:**

Guilt—either having it or laying it on someone else—rarely makes one communicate better.

Actually, it can backfire and cause communication rifts. *Realize that you do feel guilty* for not having more time with your children when you work outside the home. *Own it—and deal with it.*

To maintain a sense of control and stay connected to your family, pull yourself out of guilt mode. *Practice positive reinforcing strategies* such as:

- 1. Establish rules and guidelines.** Say what you want, then listen to reactions. “Tonight is our family night.” “You can only go to a friend’s house on Friday or Saturday nights—and only if their parents are there.” “Why don’t we watch a movie together at home on Sunday nights?” If your daughter feels she has choices, that she has a voice and will be heard, she will more than likely want to cooperate, too.
- 2. Trust that you have done the best job possible in raising your daughter, so you must learn to trust her.** Develop a balance of give and take, listening and taking to heart what you hear. You *can* learn from your daughter.
- 3. Cut yourself some slack.** You have no need to blame yourself. When you feel guilty, check it as soon as possible. You can easily sabotage communication if you fall into this defense attack mode. Try listening without formulating your next comments.

Truly, pick your battles. The time we have with our daughters is fleeting. If guilt is a problem, learn how you can keep it in check. This will ease the way to communicate on that two-way street.

Help yourself get in the zone. Breathe before reacting or speaking. Listen to what your daughter is saying. Believe that there is always a middle ground. Good listening habits, good communication with your daughter doesn't just happen. Unfortunately just because you're a

mother, you won't be automatically respected and honored by your child. You want to build a relationship of love and respect so that you can continue in your role of confidant and mentor for as long as you both want it that way.

### **STEP INTO HER SHOES**

Time to put yourself in your daughter's shoes again. If you want your daughter to open up and talk to you, *you have to listen so she will talk and you have to talk so she will listen*. You, as the mother, must work on the assumption that you don't really know what's wrong. With our children, we want to feel like we're the bosses in control and that we know it all, but we don't.

We get angry and we really need to humble ourselves. It doesn't mean we are weak. Being humble is actually a strength. You're willing to say, "I don't know this. I'm willing to learn." You need to work off the assumption that you are wrong and perhaps you will never fully know—but you want to know—and therefore you are willing to try to learn what's wrong.

Perhaps we didn't grow up in an environment that fostered an empowered mindset, but we can deal with that and other negative experiences as long as we are aware of alternative ways of reacting. In other words, we do carry baggage, but we can check that at the door when we realize:

#### ***1. We practice what we have lived***

History—both good and bad experiences—shape our behavior. If a parent grew up in a home in which the family communication style did not promote empowerment, it is typically more difficult—but certainly not impossible—for that parent to spontaneously communicate in ways that nurture an empowered mindset in children.

Sometimes we are conscious that we practice what we have lived. If it's negative, we want to change our approach—but we just don't know how. Sometimes we are not even conscious that we're doing something wrong. And that's why this book is here. To teach

us how to become conscious of our reactions—and change them so we can raise our daughters in a positive way.

We need to understand that everything we do in our lives, our behavior, comes from our experiences. So if you don't believe that what you're doing with your daughter is empowering her, then you need to go find ways—either through this book or other sources on ways that do empower her.

## ***2. Anger clouds effective communication***

When we become angry or upset, power struggles are set into play. In the best of all possible worlds, an automatic system would call on our most sophisticated communication skills to help diffuse our emotions and direct our attention to search for reasonable solutions. Having this ability would greatly minimize power struggles with our daughters. Unfortunately it is precisely when we are angry and frustrated that our communication skills which are closely interwoven with other empowerment skills such as empathy and problem solving are noticeably weakened. Angry communication often exacerbates rather than ameliorates a problem situation.

## ***3. We sometimes believe that our daughter's goal is to wear us down***

All children at times test their parents. One of our roles as parents is to set expectations and limits for our girls. They will not respond by saying, "I'm so glad you've set these limits Mommy, since it shows me that you're a concerned, loving parent." But if limits and goals are established in an atmosphere free of tension and anger, children likely will feel safe and secure. If we view our children's questioning of our authority as evidence that they hold a personal vendetta against us, then our communication is likely reinforced as negative perception and power struggles.

## ***4. Your listening style might be intimidating***

The next time your daughter is talking about something important to her, observe YOUR listening style as a mother. Are you fidgeting and looking restless? Or are you showing interest in what she has to say? You need to listen to *yourself* when you're talking to your daughter because how you respond—your tone, your actions, your body language, your demeanor—**everything**—not just the words—will let her know how you're feeling and whether you're really interested in listening to her. Your reaction will let her know if you really care, will let her know if you really understand her, will let her know that you're really there for her and not just pretending.

## 5. *You need to treat your daughter better than you treat your friends*

You have to look at your child when you speak to her. You have to meet her eyes. ***You literally have to look at her.*** She needs to see you look at her because she needs to know she has your full attention. Give her your complete attention. Ask open ended questions a lot—the who, what, where, when, and why. Why do you feel this way? What do you think happened? This will get them to think. You have to give daughter conversations the same respect you would give that of a friend. When a friend is confiding in you, you probably put down what you are doing and listen fully. ***Why would your daughter deserve less than your friend or even casual acquaintances?***

### **FLIP IT: PUT A POSITIVE SPIN ON IT**

Imagine how you would feel if you came home from work one day bursting with big news on how well you did on a project and how others complimented you. You launch into the whole story but it's obvious your spouse is bored and his attention is wandering. ***How do you feel?***

You probably feel horrible. We want our significant others to listen to us but when they don't, doubt creeps in. You may begin to doubt that what you did may not have been so much of a big deal after all because you can't even get the attention of someone who loves you. You feel deflated, depleted, depressed.

You're an adult, aware of your feelings, able to isolate the action, and the lack of attentiveness from the intent. Your spouse likely never meant to hurt your feelings or to disparage your accomplishments. Maybe he was tired or had a lot on his mind.

***Your daughter is not old enough to have this perspective.*** To her, you may have just stopped listening—which can mean that she is not important to you. Or maybe her accomplishments weren't such a big deal. She feels a little less loveable and worthwhile. After awhile, she will question herself and her self-esteem will evaporate.

***Just tune in to her—and tune out the negative.***

## **Eliminate the Four D's that Disempower Your Daughter**

1. **Don't criticize.** Don't punish her open, honest expression or questions. If you do, you may run the risk of causing your daughter to cover up to protect herself. The single greatest barrier to open communication is the tendency to criticize. You might say: "If you weren't so lazy, you'd keep your room picked up daily." What you want is for her to take responsibility for her things, but there is a better way to get that across.
2. **Don't hurry it.** Don't say, "Come on, come on. I don't have all day." Don't demand that your daughter disclose her heart and mind at breakneck speed. That is the wrong approach for understanding your daughter's mind and heart. How could she feel safe when she's up against the time clock?
3. **Don't misinterpret.** Sometimes we put our own misinterpretations on our daughter's behavior and guess her intentions. Guessing at or assuming to know what our daughter is trying to tell us usually backfires. Doing this discourages our daughters and they withdraw, frustrated at being misunderstood.
4. **Don't judge.** We automatically do this because we feel like we are protecting them. I know this is very difficult ladies. I know. It's difficult for me, too. But you really have to try not to judge your daughter or her commentary because I can guarantee if you honor her, she will come to you so much more and be so much more open. We usually shut our daughters down when we become judgmental.

## **INSTILL THE EMPOWERED MINDSET**

Do you listen to your daughter? No. I mean do you really, really listen to your daughter? What I mean when I say really, really listening to her is to listen to her from her perspective, not your perspective. In order to connect with your daughter you need to understand her life, her pressures, and what her reality is, her world.

Your daughter and you may see the world from two totally different perspectives but until you can see the world from her perspective, you will not be able to understand what she is

trying to communicate to you. Your daughter will most likely let you know when she is overwhelmed. Either directly or indirectly, she'll tell you if something is too hard for her. When mothers hear their daughters say something like I hate the violin or I hate reading, that's a very clear sign to step back. The goal is for your daughters to be self-motivated. So proceed slowly and listen carefully to what she is saying.

How you listen to your daughter really helps define what she believes and thinks about herself. If you listen to her attentively and from a place of understanding, then she feels worthy, she feels that she can be understood, that she's important enough.

Listening is a matter of acceptance. The crucial dimension in communicating with your daughter is understanding and building trust and confidence. When you listen you make it clear that you care about your daughter's interests, concerns, needs, hopes, fears, doubts, and joys. Listening is accepting another person's ideas and feelings and be okay with the fact that their viewpoint might be different from yours. ***Know that from your daughter's point of view, she is right.***

Instead of saying "I don't care what you think," or "You're just a kid" say, "I respect the way you think." Say it in a truthful, cheerful tone that will make her know "You matter to me. I want to understand you. You are just as important as me. Even if you see something differently, I would like to understand how you see it."

If you don't respect her viewpoint, or disagree with it, then just say "Okay, this is the way I see it."

This conveys that ***I see it differently rather than "I'm right" and "You're wrong."*** You want to convey with positive language that "your views and feelings—like mine—are legitimate and respectable."

In order to respond properly when you're listening, you have to know her temperament. All girls are different. Studies have shown there are **four different types of temperaments**. Generally for girls one temperament is dominant. That temperament has a need or requirement. If you understand that, you know what your daughter's needs are.

What studies have found is that different girls have different needs. One girl has a greater need to be heard. To communicate, for empathy, for compassion, to talk about problems, for people to sympathize, so if a mother is not this type of temperament, she will not know how to give her daughter what she needs. The mother will give what the mother needs because she's assuming that's what the daughter needs.

Our instinct is to give our daughter what we need but not what they need. So we need to figure out what their temperament is so we can give them what *they* need.

Some girls have equal amounts of the four types of temperaments while others are more of some and less of others. No temperament is better or worse than others, just different. So let's explore the four temperaments.

### **TEMPERAMENT #1: SENSITIVE GIRL**

#### **Characteristics:**

- ❖ Tends to feel like victim
- ❖ Can get lost in self-pity.
- ❖ Thinks more deeply about her suffering, and without being understood, she easily assumes blame.
- ❖ Part of her nature is complaining.
- ❖ Acutely aware of how she responds to life in relation to her needs, wishes and wants.
- ❖ Has a greater need to identify with what she is feeling before being willing to make a change.

**What she needs:** Listening and understanding.

Listen to your sensitive daughter then give her time and a little space to feel better after a trying, emotional or challenging situation. She needs to hear such empathetic statements as: “I understand you are disappointed; you wanted to do this and now I want you to go here.”

When given the opportunity to share their burdens, they lighten up. With empathy, a little validation of their feelings, and recognition of their inner pain and struggles, these girls begin to see the positive.

Have an attitude that is accepting of this temperament as normal and natural. Don't give the message that something was wrong and now she is okay....she was always okay.

### **Be Aware:**

In general, a sensitive girl tends to need more time. She has a different inner clock. Trying to rush sensitive girls will create more resistance. She may begin to dramatize her problems to get the empathy she needs. If saying “I have a stomachache” doesn't get a warm, attentive response, then it becomes, “I have a really bad headache and stomachache, and no one is ever nice to me.” Without understanding, every ache is magnified. The lack of empathy will actually create more pain physically and emotionally. When parents ignore a sensitive child, feelings and problems just get bigger.

### **Tune In**

Trying to cheer up a sensitive daughter might backfire. When she is upset or seems depressed, it does not work to explain why she should not be upset. This may cause her to focus on the bad in an attempt to feel understood and validated. Parents must be careful to ***listen more and hold back from trying to solve their daughter's problems in an attempt to make her feel better.***

A sensitive daughter needs to know that she is not alone and that her parents also suffer. Although parents should not go to her for emotional support, they can share some of their

struggles with her. For example, if your daughter complains how hard, painful, or difficult something is, you might want to say, "I know, why just today I felt really awful too. I was stuck in traffic and I had a very important meeting I had to attend." Without looking to your daughter for comfort, this approach satisfies a particular need of a sensitive child.

**Help Her Shine:**

When a sensitive child gets what she needs, her special gifts can unfold. She is thoughtful, deeply perceptive, creative, a good communicator and original. She is nurturing, compassionate, gentle and helpful. She derives great fulfillment by serving others and the world.

**TEMPERAMENT #2: ACTIVE GIRL**

**Characteristics:**

- ❖ Tends to resist authority, gets in trouble
- ❖ Dominates situations
- ❖ Lacks compassion for others, much more self-centered than others.
- ❖ Rushes to the front and wants it first.
- ❖ Wants to be the center of attention.
- ❖ Needs enormous amounts of acknowledgment and appreciation.
- ❖ From a positive point of view, she can be *the leader*.

**Need:** Preparation and structure

Active daughters need a lot of structure; otherwise they easily go out of control and resist your authority. They need a game plan. They need to know in advance what the rules are and who the boss is. It is only with this kind of preparation that these girls become very supportive and cooperative.

**Be Aware:**

If she's upset, you don't need to ask her a lot of questions like the sensitive girl. ***You need to immediately give her a solution, responsibility and a role.*** She needs lots of supervision and direction. An active daughter can become resistant if you don't forgive her for her mistakes. Active daughters learn about themselves by making mistakes. She should not be punished, but she generally is the most heavily punished. When she is resistant to your requests, it is best to begin an activity and invite her to join in. She is self-motivated and will cooperate when she knows what she has to do or there is a plan. She is always ready to move on, lead, or do things her way.

#### **Tune In:**

Long conversations are counterproductive and often are regarded as a punishment. Active daughters always want to be part of the winning team. They like power and know themselves by what they have done and their results. They are competitive and need to move.

#### **Help Her Shine:**

When active daughters get the structure they need automatically, they become more sensitive, compassionate and generous. With regular time outs, they gradually learn to be more patient and develop the ability to delay gratification. They become responsible, competent and make great leaders. They make things happen. Over time, as they feel more successful and confident in themselves, they become more sensitive in understanding others' feelings.

### **TEMPERAMENT #3: RESPONSIVE GIRL**

#### **Characteristics:**

- ❖ Social and outgoing.
- ❖ Develops a sense of self from her responses to the world and her relationships.
- ❖ Is self-motivated to see, hear, taste and experience everything life has to offer.
- ❖ Each new experience brings out a new facet of herself.

**Need:** Instruction and direction

The responsive girl needs constant stimulation. She moves from one thing to another and needs to be given opportunities to do lots of things.

**Be Aware:**

Responsive girls come alive in response to new input. Although these girls like change, they resist having to focus. They often throw tantrums when being asked to put on a coat or do something in a particular way. They have a greater need for freedom to do their own thing. If they are criticized, they won't feel nurtured and become cooperative. They need stimulation in order to meet their needs, yet *move from one thing to another and many times do not complete things.*

**Tune In:**

It is important for parents to understand and not worry that chaos is part of a responsive girl's learning process. She needs time to explore, discover and experience life. She is easily distracted by new opportunities and will often forget instructions. Do not get annoyed when they do this; she really has forgotten. When resistant to your requests, responsive daughters simply need to be redirected to another possibility, a new activity, or a different opportunity for experience. Let your daughters take time to develop and they will easily adapt to the real world when ready.

**Help Her Shine:**

You have a child who needs more stimulation and coaxing. For example, if you ask them to put on their jacket, they won't put it on. So, you say, "The other day, I wasn't wearing my jacket

either. I looked up at the beautiful sky and then it got cold and so I put on my jacket. C'mon, put on your jacket right now!" So, you distracted them from what was bothering them. Unlike the sensitive child, where if you address an issue, they feel worse, the responsive girl simply needs to be convinced that an action will be worth her effort.

#### **TEMPERAMENT #4: RECEPTIVE GIRL**

##### **Characteristics:**

- ❖ Needs routine, schedule, ritual and rhythm in her life.
- ❖ Wants to know what will happen next and needs to know what to expect.
- ❖ When she understands the flow of a situation, she is most cooperative.
- ❖ New situations where she doesn't know what to expect will trigger resistance.
- ❖ Needs control over details.
- ❖ Quiet, easy-going, non-demanding
- ❖ Have a fear of rejection or disappointing parents
- ❖ Can get into a rut of not participating; letting life pass them by if they are not coaxed into taking part.

##### **Need:** Ritual and rhythm

Receptive girls respond well to reassurance and encouragement. They are good-natured and thoughtful children. Their life has to be in a realm of expectation and knowing what to expect all the time. They will later grow out of that and take risks. As long as it is not a big change they are most cooperative.

##### **Be Aware:**

They are often neglected because they are so quiet, easygoing, and non-demanding. They need to be gently motivated to do things and be challenged, even though they would rather sleep or stay at home. You have to give them a task and help them develop interests. They most likely

would not do that alone. Although they like being told what to do, they will resist being pushed into things or rushed. They have a great fear of disappointing their parents or being rejected.

**Tune In:**

Like sensitive girls, the receptive girl needs more time to do things or make changes. These girls love physical comfort and rather than risk discomfort, would rather sit and watch—unlike active girls. They don't need to lead or even participate. As young children, they often are content to be on the sidelines, perhaps enjoying quiet activities with little interaction with others.

**Help Her Shine:**

The security of regular routines, rituals, and rhythm supports them in gradually taking the risks required to do something new. When they resist doing new things, be gentle. Never force participation. Repetition gives them security. They will resist but their resistance is often silent. They hold back tantrums because they don't want to cause problems or be an inconvenience.

**THE FINE LINE:**

Listen to her. It sounds simple enough, yet at times it's not...

It was one of those nights. I was tired, driving and looking for an address I could not find for the life of me. My daughter was in her booster car seat in the back when she started in.

"Mommy, why do...?"

I interrupted. "Hold on mija. I'm trying to find an address right now."

"But, Mommy?"

"Mija, please. I told you to hold on until I find this address. I need to concentrate. Okay?"

“Mommy but can you please just tell me really quick...?”

Reacting to the momentary frustration of being lost, I snapped, “I don’t know, Divina. I don’t know, okay?”

“But mommy, why?”

“Divina, I told you I don’t know.”

“Mommy, you really don’t know anything, do you?”

“No, Divina. I don’t, okay? I don’t know anything.”

She was silent for a moment then asked, “Mommy, if you don’t know anything then why are you giving speeches all over the world?”

I didn’t know whether to laugh or reprimand her. My first instinct was to reprimand her for being disrespectful—at least that is what my mom or dad would have done to me. Instead I chose to laugh because in reality she was just asking a question so she could make sense of what I had told her. I reacted out of frustration yet she took in what I told her, analyzed it and realized it didn’t make sense if she were to align it with what she knows I do for a living—empower people—often times by giving speeches and answering their questions.

If I would have reprimanded her I would have done her a big injustice. She wasn’t disrespecting me. She was trying to figure out the truth.

Every time our children ask us a question, we need to realize that the way we answer helps shape the lens of how they see the world. We need to listen before they form an opinion or come to believe a truth that would have benefitted from the insight of a mom, a woman, or someone who cared.

## **RISKY BUSINESS**

You want your child to feel like she can come to you with anything—a triumph to be shared, a problem to be discussed. You want to foster an environment of trust and enjoyment of each other's company. No one wants to participate in a conversation where one person is sitting on high, handing down judgment. If your daughter tells you of something she did at school and you are quick to judge, she will not be so quick to come back to you. This is especially true of sharing problems. A daughter wants to feel her parents are unreservedly on her side.

So let her speak her mind. Let her use her voice. Wait. Check the emotions with the words. Wait again. See her body language. Wait yet again. Then determine her need. Try, try, try to be non-judgmental. She might just come back when you give her a safe, open-minded haven where she can be herself and not fear you will react in a quick, judgmental way.

## **YOU GO GIRL! TIP FOR THE DAY**

When your daughter starts talking to you—if it is safe—stop *everything* you are doing and look at her face. Giving her your undivided attention will let her know you are truly listening, which will validate her existence and her self-worth.

Remember to *LISTEN*

**L**—look

**I**—in

**S**—side

**T**—to

**E**—examine

**N**—need

Remind yourself to **listen** by learning the acronym for the word. Look inside what your daughter is saying and try to understand what her need is. Does she need me to understand? Does she need me to just love her? Does she need me to fight for her?

When you look inside to determine her need, you will have listened with your heart.

