



## Building Connection Through Open Conversations

Deeper connections are something we can help create for both ourselves and others. **Start close to home (or better yet, *at home*) [by learning how to be a better listener](#) and practicing the skill regularly.**

Listening to others in an open, attentive, and non-judgmental way makes them feel seen and heard and is a great way to increase feelings of connection. Take the skill into your community: whether that's at work, school, or your neighborhood. Practice the art of really listening to others, even when you don't agree. When others are curious about what you're doing, pass the skills along to them - it can be contagious in a great way. Pretty soon, you will probably notice more people in your life listening to you as well.

In your efforts at effective listening, you may notice that people talk about the more day-to-day aspects of their lives but tend to hesitate to talk about more difficult topics. Connecting with others in a meaningful way doesn't mean talking about difficult or painful topics all the time. Ideally, connection should include a mix of everyday topics, celebration, laughing, sadness, shared frustration, remembering, planning, giving help, receiving help, *and* more difficult topics when they arise.

Genuine listening is a special gift – the gift of your time and attention. This alone can strengthen relationships and improve understanding.

- Face the speaker and maintain eye contact – this lets them know they have your full attention.
- Be attentive, but relaxed – be present and mentally screen out distractions.
- Keep an open mind – listen without judging or jumping to conclusions.
- Don't interrupt and don't impose your “solutions” – if they want your ideas, they'll ask.

What's most important is that you create safety in the relationship and let the other person know that if they want to talk about something difficult, you are there to listen and offer unconditional support. If you're part of an organization, company, school or other community group you can also use [tools and activities to help members connect more deeply with one another and reach out when they need support.](#)



**By turning our attention to building connection in our own lives and in our communities, we can be happier, healthier, and find strength in community.**

**Additional Resources:**

Learn to become a better listener and help create more supportive spaces in your community: <https://www.sidewalktalksf.com/>

How to go from Small Talk to Real Talk: <https://www.eachmindmatters.org/ask-the-expert/small-talk-real-talk/>

10 Talks About Building Closer Relationships: <https://ideas.ted.com/how-to-build-closer-relationships/>