

Youth and Family Corner: It's Never Too Early (or Late) to Listen and Learn

When there's an issue or a cause that matters to you, you might want to jump straight into it to start making change. Or maybe you know you want to help but don't know where to begin. Listening to different perspectives and learning about the world around us are important steps to help us make decisions about our actions and how we can best help our communities. Listening and learning isn't limited to what we study in school – it's a life-long process that's always important whether we're seven-years-old or 77.

Below are three tips for youth and families to think about the importance and practice of listening and learning.

Where do you learn what you learn? You can learn pretty much anywhere, whether it's at school, in the books you read, at a museum or through talking with friends and family. Each source has its own value and perspective and it's important to learn from a variety of sources. For example, you might learn something about the past from talking with your grandparents that you wouldn't be able to find in a history book, but a book might give you a broader perspective on historical events than your grandparents could. At the same time, not every source is accurate - your friend might tell you an interesting fact about spaceships, but if they're not an expert on space travel, you might want to confirm the information with an expert source.

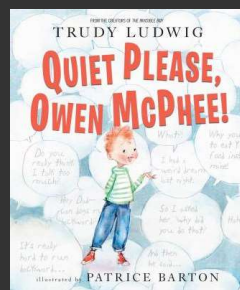
How do you ask questions? There's more to learning than just finding information: another key component is asking questions. The way you frame a question can change the answer and the information you find. Imagine if you disagree with someone very strongly – how does your perspective change if you ask "Why do they believe that?" instead of "What's wrong with them?"

"Learn" by example. We can all listen and learn on our own, but to make real change in our community – whether that's a family, neighborhood, school or city – it's important for everyone to listen and learn. Staying curious, listening to others' perspectives, thinking carefully and changing your mind when presented with new information are all great ways to "learn" by example, and model this important behavior for those around you. (This goes both ways - adults don't always have all the answers and can learn from young people's perspectives!)

Listening and learning are ongoing processes. The three tips above are just the beginning, to help you get started and make this process into a habit.

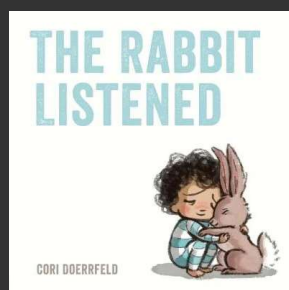
Family Friendly Books & Resources

The following are resources for families to encourage listening and learning from others as well as information on finding other resources you can trust:

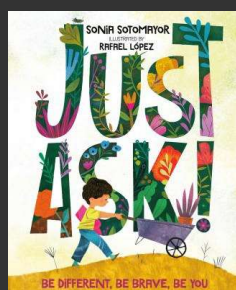


Quiet Please,
Owen McPhee!

Trudy Ludwig &
Patrice Barton



The Rabbit Listened
Cori Doerrfeld



Just Ask! Be Different,
Be Brave, Be You
Sonia Sotomayor



CNN Townhall for
Kids & Family



Common Sense
News & Media Literacy