



Thank you

FOR YOUR
INTEREST IN
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from
Perspective!.

[LEARN MORE](#) about this title!



USE YOUR SERVICE-MINDEDNESS TO HELP SHAPE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

As most of us know, teaching is a service, and in the article “Improving Classroom Management Issues by Building Connections with Families” (Robison 2020), the author details how making yourself vulnerable will allow you to make a deeper connection with your students:

Coming from a place of service is a mind-set that will guide one’s words and actions. In short, it is to simply realize that a general...teacher’s job is to serve all students and their families, much like other public servants or even members of the clergy. As...teachers, we are unique in our role of serving all students, not just those that self-select into performing....While there are limitations to this mind-set, such as setting reasonable boundaries for your time and not catering to every whim of every family, coming from a place of service can help in communicating potentially tense issues with family members. (p. 39)

Applying such a service mindset needn’t be restricted to your interactions with family members. It can also work in the interest of making an empathetic connection with your students—a connection that can offer more success than you can imagine. There is one proviso, however: You have to be open enough to shut up and listen to them. When you are curious about a student’s world and ask questions to understand things, you are automatically expanding both your perspective and your horizons. Take this time to access both your own and the student’s perspective so you can come up with innovative ways to shift both.



HOW TO LISTEN

Active listening requires patience and practice, but those who take the time to engage in it will strengthen their connections with students in powerful ways. Moreover, if we strengthen these relationships with cultural awareness and relevance (a subject that is explored in more depth later in this book), our

connections will be even stronger. For now, there are two general principles to keep in mind:

- Learn the culture of the student's community where you work.
- Center your efforts around gaining a perspective that is conducive for reaching all students, beginning with a reflection on your own biases.

CHECK YOUR BIASES AT THE DOOR

A prerequisite to shutting up and listening is checking your own biases and prejudgments at the door. For example, when you begin to engage in a conversation with a student, stop thinking about how you think the conversation will go. Even if you have tried to engage with this student before on many other occasions, you must not prejudge how you think the conversation is going to go *this time*. Since you are now approaching the conversation with new knowledge, insights, and clarity, you should clear everything from past interactions out of your mind.

CHECK YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Body language can tell a person everything. And in many cases, *uncaring* body language will make recipients shut down because they believe you have already formulated an outcome before an interaction has even happened. Believe it or not, our body language can change an entire conversation before it has begun. Reflect on your own interpersonal interactions: What is the message you receive from folded arms and a head cocked to the side? Refrain from any body language that shows you are not interested because your student will instantly become defensive and not open up. Part of shutting up and listening is learning to relax.

CHECK AND RELEASE PAST INTERACTIONS

You may miss an opportunity to really connect with your students when they are opening up and allowing themselves to vent if you are sitting on the sidelines and anxiously waiting for a specific outcome. You will be pleasantly surprised when, instead of forming judgments based on past experiences, you use this time to relax your mind and body language to be open to what the students has to tell you. Sadly enough, you do not know it all, especially when it comes to the hearts, minds, and experiences of students. For this reason, particularly in the early stages of engaging with your students, open *your* heart and mind!

Dos and Don'ts

We close each chapter with a summary list of Dos and Don'ts, followed by a reflection. Use this space and time to prepare yourself as you begin this new journey as an educator with a more enlightened perspective.

DO:

- Present your body language in a relaxed and open stance.
- Make eye contact with your students as they are talking.
- Give students adequate space to feel comfortable, but be close enough for them to know you are engaging in a conversation (approximately two to three feet apart).
- Respond using a caring voice, being careful to avoid inflections on words that may be perceived as accusatory.
- Have an open mind in response to what your students have to say.
- Listen from a place of understanding.
- Allow your students to be heard without judgment.
- Close your mouth more and open your ears.

DON'T:

- Form an answer in your head—i.e., form your own hypothesis—before you get a response. This not only works against active listening but leads to judging the student before hearing what the student has to say.
- Make facial expressions that can unconsciously express a bias.
- Use or make gestures while your student is talking—for example, no hands thrown in the air, hands on your hips, or any sarcastic gesture that will make a child shut down.
- Assume the negative immediately.
- Force your opinion of learning on your student.
- Overtalk your student for the sake of exerting your authority.
- Go another day without reflecting on how you have affected others by not being responsive to what they are saying.

Chapter Reflection

This chapter has emphasized the importance of silence and also the benefit that comes from active listening. The end of each chapter offers a space for work and reflection. Workshops can be very useful and inspiring, but in the absence of teacher reflection, they are unlikely to have much influence on improving your craft. Now is the time for us to think and to write.

Think and write about a time when you made a connection with a student that was meaningful. Think and reflect on what made that connection meaningful and also what could have made it even more significant.

Think of a time when you missed an opportunity to connect with a student through active listening. Did you spend too much time talking when you could have been quiet? What questions could you have asked that student?

How do you think you can make a connection with a student in the future? Take the time to plan a specific time to make this connection and think deeply about your response.
