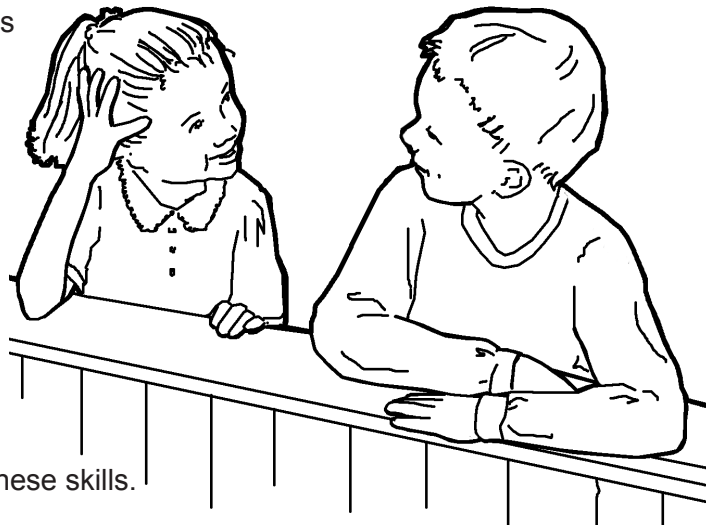


Building Family Bonds

Everyone wants to feel cared for by the people around them. In school this year, students are learning skills that will help them create healthy relationships with their families and friends.

Today your child learned some basic listening skills and used them in class:

- Stop what you are doing.
- Look at the person who is talking.
- Be quiet while the person is talking.
- Ask questions or make comments on what the person said.



Being a good listener takes lots of practice. You can help your child practice doing these things when he or she is listening to someone. Set a good example when you listen to your child. Praise him or her when you see your child using these skills.

Creating healthy bonds requires families to talk with each other and work together. Doing things together provides many chances for children to practice their listening skills, as well as express their own feelings and interests. Such conversations help increase your child's self-esteem, confidence, and self-respect. Then your child can make healthy choices and build good relationships with family and friends.



Here are some activities to try so everyone in your family can practice being good listeners for each other.

Activity 1: Honoring Special People

Take a few minutes to tell each family member what you think he or she does well. You might also tell each person something you like about him or her. For example, you could say you like it when your child makes his or her bed without being told. Or you might talk about the beautiful colors your child used in a picture. Ask people to take turns doing this activity. Be sure every member of the family knows there is something very special about him or her.

Activity 2: Getting to Know You

Start a sentence about personal interests, and ask each family member to finish it. Here are some ideas to get you started:

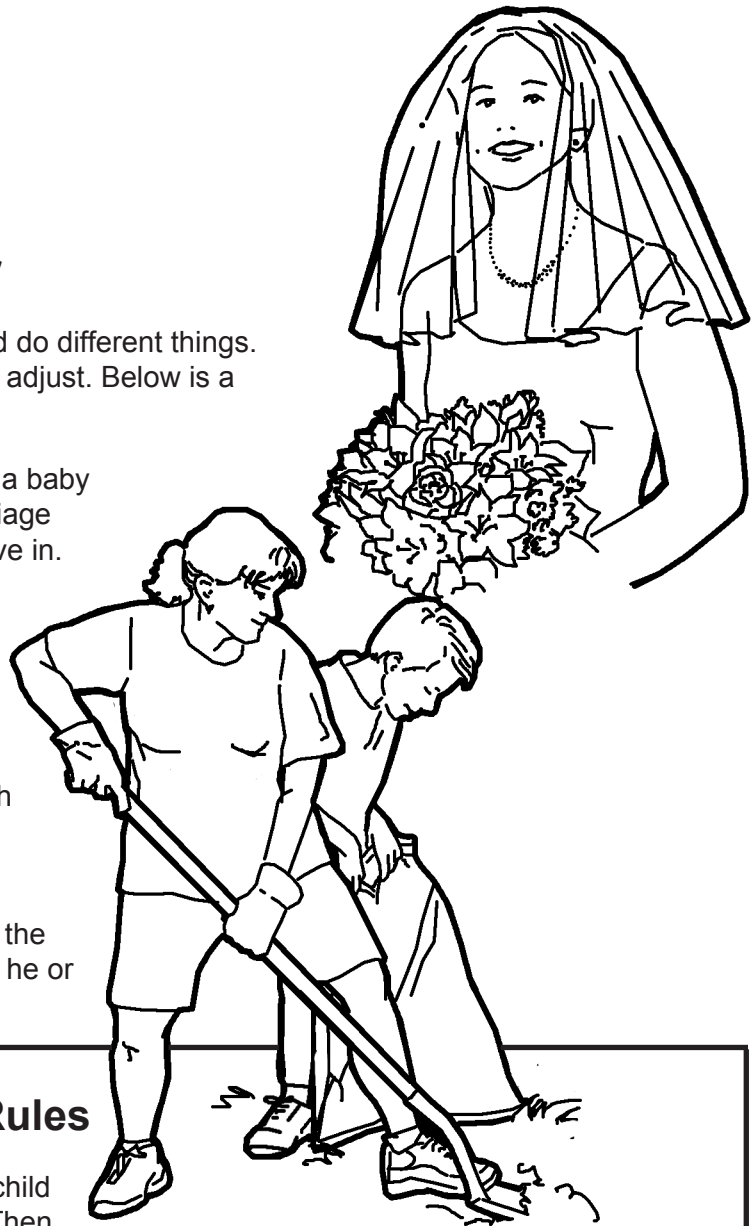
- I like to explore. . . .
- I like to collect. . . .
- I like to pretend. . . .
- I like stories about. . . .
- My favorite vacation was. . . .
- My favorite food is. . . .
- If I could do anything today, I would. . . .
- I would like to become. . . .

Activity 3: Working Together

Every family changes as people grow up and do different things. During these times, family members need to adjust. Below is a list of changes families often make:

- Someone joins the family, such as when a baby is born, someone gets married, a remarriage blends two families, or grandparents move in.
- The family moves to a new home.
- A parent begins or ends a job.
- Only one parent is at home due to separation, divorce, illness, or business trips.
- Someone is ill.
- There is a big project to do at home, such as painting, yard work, redecorating, or spring cleaning.

If your family is making a change or might in the future, talk about it with your child. See what he or she can do to help your family.



Activity 4: Following Family Rules

During a quiet time with your family, ask your child what some of his or her classroom rules are. Then talk about some of the rules your family has. This is a good time to find out if new rules need to be added or old rules changed.

Talk about the results of breaking rules. For example, if your child doesn't ask permission before going on a bike ride, the result may be that he or she cannot ride the bike for a while. When children practice thinking about what could happen if they break the rules, they are more likely to think before doing something that may hurt them.

Activity 5: Help Everyone Improve

Visit the "Family Corner" on the Educational Materials Center website at www.emc.cmich.edu/family. You will find a checklist you can use as a family to assess how well each person is doing when he or she listens.

