

Part IV

L-I-S-T-E-N

"Being listened to is so close to being loved that most people cannot tell the difference." (David Oxberg)

I often think that the problem we have in our world today is that we have a 1st Amendment that basically says that we can say anything we want, anytime we want, any place we want. But we have no corresponding 2nd Amendment that says we have an obligation to "listen". Most of us had classes throughout our lives that taught us "reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic", but very few of us ever had classes that taught us how to listen. We have probably all had the experience of how it made us feel when someone really listened to us and made us feel important. Coaches and athletic administrators need to be outstanding listeners. How do we do that? I believe we need to consciously implement a new plan which I call L-I-S-T-E-N.

- L – Look them in the eye. I believe that we hear with our ears, but we really listen with our eyes.
- I – Inquiry Method. Instead of making statements, ask questions to find out what the other person is thinking so that you can learn what it feels like to walk in their shoes.
- S – Shut your Mouth. We spend most of our listening time framing our response to what the other person is saying. Instead, don't respond, don't correct, just let them talk. Many people aren't actually looking for you to solve their problem; they just want to be able to express it; they want to be able to tell their story!
- T – Tell them what they said. You demonstrate that you really heard and understood by repeating and rephrasing what they told you. "If I understood you correctly, you are saying...Do I have that right?"
- E – Empathy. Demonstrate empathy for the other person's position. "I know it isn't easy being a parent and I now understand your concerns." Let them know that you can identify with their pain and confusion.
- N – Navigate to New solutions. What happened yesterday obviously didn't work...that is why the parent is upset and concerned. So where are we going to go from here. Let go of the past and look to new ways of thinking to resolve issues.

If we truly L-I-S-T-E-N to our parents, we will be able to communicate more effectively and help them realize that we are partners in the process, each with a role, and each with the best interest of the student-athlete in mind. When we demonstrate the ability to listen to a parent, we communicate our love and concern and have a greater opportunity to turn "a lemon into lemonade" and produce a positive outcome.