

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Effectiveness in relating to others--whether friends, family or people in authority--depends upon the quality of our speaking and listening. Both speaking and listening place certain responsibilities on us.

The following is what often occurs during an interaction between two people:

- * A speaker may be uncertain what he/she wishes to say. The message may be jumbled or consist of conflicting thoughts. There is a tendency for listeners to judge an unclear message as either positive or negative based on past experiences with the speaker.
- * A listener may stop listening because he/she thinks he/she already knows what the speaker is going to say before the speaker has finished her statement.
- * A listener tends to "tune out" ideas that he/she thinks he/she disagrees with or does not understand instead of remaining focused on a difficult topic.
- * When two people are interacting in the listening and speaking process, there are times when the speaker and listener get confused ideas about what one is saying and the other is hearing.

Responsibilities of the Speaker:

- * Try to organize your thoughts before speaking.
- * Check to see if the listener understands what you are saying: "Am I being clear?"
- * Check to see if the listener is involved: "Are you following me?"
- * When asking questions, be sure to listen to the answer.

Responsibilities of the Listener:

- * When you listen, concentrate and be attentive. Look at the speaker and face him or her while he or she is talking.
- * If the speaker talks at length, intervene occasionally to remain involved: "Are you saying...?"
- * Ask for clarification when you are confused: "I'm confused about that last point..."
- * Respond with positive regard such as nods, "yes" and "um hmm" to encourage people to continue and to indicate understanding.
- * Concentrate on listening; don't reply until the speaker is finished.
- * Whenever appropriate, summarize what you believe is the content of the speaker's message to check your understanding of what is being said and to help the speaker identify for him/herself the salient issues.