

LESSON FOUR



Listening is the starting point of leadership.

In this lesson our goal is to teach the kids that leadership starts with listening. Being a leader requires that you know something about the people you are leading. Most conversations between kids aren't really conversations at all. Often, a child is simply waiting for his or her turn to talk rather than listening to what is being said. You might be thinking that you know a few adults like that. Listening is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced or the child will grow up waiting for their turn to talk. The first part of this lesson is intended to frustrate the kids a little bit. Be sensitive to them as you interrupt them and be sure not to be offensive in the process.

Coach: I am going to make a pizza tonight, but I don't know how. Can any of you help me and tell me how to make a pizza?

Be sure you select one child to answer the question. To make the point, you will need only one child speaking at a time. After the child says a few words abruptly interrupt them like this:

Coach: OK great. Anyone else have an idea?

Pick another child and interrupt him or her as he or she starts to speak. Repeat the process three or four times so they can clearly understand that you aren't listening to anything they are saying.

Coach: Ok, listen up. [Pause] It's funny that I would tell you to listen to me when I did such a bad job of listening to you. Thank you for trying to help me, but I was actually playing a little trick on you. I want to show how important it is to listen. How did you feel when I interrupted you and didn't listen to you?

Facilitate the conversation by suggesting some words to describe how they might have felt such as angry, unimportant, sad or disappointed. Be sure to look directly at each child that speaks. You want to demonstrate a stark comparison to the previous conversation.

Coach: So I made you feel pretty bad when I didn't listen. I am really sorry. Guess who else suffered because I didn't listen to you?

You are looking for them to see that you suffered. If they don't come up with the answer, you can be silly and start pointing at yourself.

Coach: That's right; me. You all had great ideas, but because I wasn't listening I didn't hear any of them. I was being a bad leader. What do you think good leaders should do when people talk to them?

Listen is the answer.

Coach: You're right; listen. It sure looks like you are being very good leaders right now because everyone is really listening. Why do you think listening to others is so important?

Have fun with these answers because they will vary greatly. This part of the concept can be tough for the kids to figure out on their own. The point is to show what a good listener YOU are.

Coach: Those are all very good answers. When you take the time to listen to someone, you are showing them respect and people really like to be respected. Don't you all feel better now that I am listening to you? As your coach and

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your leader, I want you to know that you are important and that I respect you. It's actually pretty cool. The best way for me to lead each of you is to listen to each of you. I really want to help you and when I listen to you I will usually hear ways that I can help you. One last question: What is the best way to get better at something?

The answer is practice.

Coach: You are right again; PRACTICE. From now on we all have to practice being good leaders by listening when people speak to us. And yes, that includes your parents!

Take a few moments to assess comprehension and answer questions. Then move on to a summary statement or prayer that references and reinforces this lesson.

Reaffirm the APIVEO commitment with the team cheer.

Coach: Ok, are you ready? I want your parents to think we're crazy loud!

Start the cheer in a normal tone and get louder each time you ask the question.

Coach: Always play for who?

Team: Each other!

Coach: (louder) ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?

Team: (louder) EACH OTHER!

Coach: (really loud!) ALWAYS PLAY FOR WHO?

Team: (screaming loud!) EACH OTHER!

Coach: Stand up with authority and yell "[TEAM NAME] ROCK!

Following the cheer, I will always talk to each player after every practice to thank them for "bringing it" to practice. This only takes 10-15 seconds per player, but is worth its weight in gold. There are a few players that will be headed for the parking lot before the cheer is done, so you must be intentional and act fast. I typically get right in front of the player and, then, get on one knee, look him/her in the eye and mention something positive about his/her performance in practice and how glad I am that he/she is part of our team. You need to be quick to respect the parent's time, but you also need to be sincere.

Be intentional and remember, Always Play 4 Each Other!™