



# **Mental Health Association of Northern Kentucky**

**A LEADER IN PROVIDING ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, AND SERVICES THAT PROMOTE MENTAL WELLNESS**

**EDUCATION AND SCREENING OUTREACH PARTNER FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

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## **A DOZEN COMMANDMENTS FOR GOOD LISTENING**

1. **STOP TALKING.**  
All other commandments depend on this ; you cannot listen if you are talking !
2. **GET RID OF DISTRACTIONS OR SET A CONVENIENT TIME.**  
Close the door, turn off the TV or radio. Don't doodle or fiddle with things.  
"Give me 10 minutes to finish what I'm doing, I want to hear you".
3. **PUT THE TALKER AT EASE.**  
Help the speaker feel he / she is free to talk. Value him / her as a person and realize his / her message is important.
4. **LOOK AT THE TALKER.**  
The face, eyes and hands all help convey messages. Listen to understand rather than to reply.
5. **CONCENTRATE ON THE WHOLE MESSAGE.**  
Listen for ideas, feelings and emotions. How the message is said may be as revealing as the words used.
6. **LEAVE YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS ASIDE.**  
Try to keep unrelated problems out of it. Focus on the message being given. Deal with one problem at a time.
7. **SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION.**  
Signal your interest with smiles, nods, etc. Ask clarifying questions when you don't understand.
8. **BE PATIENT.**  
Don't interrupt. Allow the talker plenty of time. Don't walk away.
9. **USE THE RATE DIFFERENCE CONSTRUCTIVELY.**  
You can think 4 times faster than he / she can talk. Avoid jumping to conclusions or assuming things. Use the time difference to fully understand and remember what is said.
10. **HOLD YOUR TEMPER.**  
An angry person gets the wrong meaning from words - and uses many he / she regrets.
11. **GO EASY ON ARGUING & CRITICIZING.**  
They put the other person on the defensive. The speaker may "clam up" or get angry. Don't argue : even if you win, you both lose. Don't even argue mentally - it prevents you from hearing.
12. **RESPOND TO THE MESSAGE.**  
Use significant phrases such as "I hear you", "How can I help ?" or "I need some time to think about this, can we finish our discussion tomorrow ?"