

CURBING A CHATTERBOX

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I am sure that each of us can recall being cornered by someone who just wouldn't stop talking. It is very frustrating especially when you have to wait till they draw breath before you can get a word in edgeways! They don't see the kind of signals such as ... you haven't got time to stop and listen, that your children are getting restless, or that you are just plain bored! So why do they just keep on talking? Is it because they like the sound of their own voice or that they love an audience? Well, to tell you the truth I have sometimes been referred to as a chatterbox, so I am heeding the advice in this article myself!!!

To curb or cure the habit of talking too much we first need to understand the causes. People talk to express themselves or because they are passionate about something. However, part of social learning is to understand when it is OK to hold the floor and when it is time to let others have a turn. In meetings it is the chairperson's job to direct the input and ensure that everyone has the chance to put their ideas or concerns forward. Unfortunately, we often come across a person who wants to dominate and control in these sorts of situations. Initially, we have to learn to control ourselves and become sensitive to how others might perceive us in social situations.

It is sad that often the motor mouth is not sensitive and does not pick up other people's vibes or cues! Some people crave attention and they certainly get it when people listen to them. It maybe that these talkers come from big families where they felt there was barely room to express their opinions so they grab the opportunities whenever they can. Others may be from families where they were the only child and have been led to believe that they can and should talk all they want to because they are, and wish to remain, the center of attention. Some struggle with low self-esteem and become withdrawn, while others may become the noisy clown to fill the deficit they feel within themselves. Some talkers feel uncomfortable with silence so they fill up the vacant air (ear) space while failing to understand that the audience doesn't want to hear their babble.

There are others who don't want to listen to what another person has to say so they over-talk to prevent the other person from getting a word in. They are basically selfish and insensitive.

Some people actually have a talking addiction and satisfy their addiction by becoming orators such as preachers, speakers or comedians with a captive audience that cannot interrupt them. Having a talking addiction literally means the person can't stop talking. My husband, Brian, had a young boy with a talking addiction at school. No matter what Brian said, the boy would not stop talking. In the end Brian had to put his hand up, speak sternly to the boy and tell him to STOP talking. As soon as the boy opened his mouth to speak again, Brian

responded with, "I said STOP TALKING!" He had to repeat himself several times before the boy closed his mouth. Even then his lips continued to move. Granted this is an extreme case, but parents do have a responsibility to teach their children how to appropriately contribute to conversation and when enough is enough. Unfortunately, some children learn to be a motor mouth through observing a parent.

Hogging the conversation is disrespectful, selfish and it devalues other 'would be' participants in the conversation. It is often a symptom of a lack of discipline and sensitivity in a person's life. It is, therefore, imperative that parents take notice and coach their children to be great listeners as well as to be able to express themselves.

Here are some suggestions regarding balanced conversation. Make sure each person (adult or child) is given the opportunity to express his/her feelings at home. Be the facilitator or chairperson at family meetings or around the dinner table. Tell them that what they say is not only worthwhile but also appreciated. Spend time with each of your children separately so they can discuss concerns or share their achievements. By giving them your undivided attention in some circumstances, while giving everyone a turn in others, you help your kids work out when it is appropriate to hold the floor and when it is someone else's turn. Explain what the signals are likely to be when the listener has had enough.

Talking people's ears off is not OK! Nobody likes it – except the talker. I have often heard it said that while we are talking we are not learning anything. We are all born with two ears and one mouth. Therefore, it stands to reason that we should be listening twice as much as we are talking. Everyone deserves to be heard. We often do this with God, too. We do all the talking and very little listening. No wonder we sometimes have unanswered prayer. God may have been ready to give us the answer, but we failed to listen.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.