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## PEDAGOGY

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### The method of active listening and common mistakes during its application

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**Abstract.** The article considers the method of active listening, which significantly increases the effectiveness of parents as a source of assistance to their children. It is noted that this method enhances parents' influence on the child, but the effect significantly differs from the traditional one. It is emphasized that active listening is a method of such influence on children when they find solutions to their problems on their own. It should be remembered that the application of active listening in practice requires some efforts, and in the process of mastering this method, parents inevitably face difficulties and even defeats. Continuously improving active listening skills is believed to help parents interact effectively with their children.

**Keywords:** *Thomas Gordon, active listening, parents, children, mistakes, family upbringing.*

**Introduction.** Is it possible to have friendship and mutual understanding between parents and children? This question worries both adults and young. In recent decades, parents have become increasingly interested in how to raise their children properly, or how to communicate with them to improve relationships. Parents are increasingly aware that children need parents-friends, that is, parents who can be told about the most personal and important things, with whom they can share their joys, secrets and problems. What does such friendship mean? In our opinion, first of all, it is the ability of parents to listen to their child, to be sensitive and attentive.

Problems of raising children and possible ways to build effective relationships between children and parents are considered by family pedagogy, which is a field of scientific knowledge that is developing very rapidly, absorbing the best achievements of domestic and world science and practice [3].

**Short review of the publications on the subject.** Methods of effective communication between parents and children have always been in the researchers' viewpoint. Among the well-known domestic educators and scientists we can mention such as Y. Boyko, T. Voronina, N. Kupyn, M. Mosiienko, V. Postovyi, I. Rybalchenko, I. Stelmakhovych, I. Stetsenko, K. Ushynskiy, L. Yuzefyk and many others [1; 2; 4; 5; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11]. Problems of psychology of family relations were studied and possible ways to improve the pedagogical culture of parents among foreign scholars were suggested by S. Alcock, S. Degotardi, A. Devi, M. Fleer, L. Li [12; 13; 14]. It should also be noted that, unfortunately, for a long time the scientific heritage of the American scientist, psychologist and educator Thomas Gordon [15] remained unnoticed by scientists.

Thus, **the purpose of the article** is to get acquainted with Thomas Gordon's views on the correct use of active listening by parents in the process of their communication with children.

**Materials and methods.** To achieve the goal of the article, the general scientific and specific research methods were used: the theoretical methods of research (content analysis of Thomas Gordon's pedagogical heritage); the method of analysis, synthesis, generalization.

**Presenting main material.** Let's start with Thomas Gordon's belief that active listening is an effective way to support another person in solving a problem, provided that the essence of the problem is recognized and the interlocutor

is allowed to find own solution of it. According to the scientist, active listening significantly increases the effectiveness of parents as a source of assistance to their children, but this assistance is different from that usually provided by parents. This method increases the influence of parents on the child, but this effect is significantly different from what most parents try to do. Active listening is a method of such influence on children when they find solutions to their problems on their own [15, p.74-75].

Through active listening, parents can master a skill that was previously considered exclusively the talent of professionals and used only by professional psychologists. Using active listening, parents have the opportunity to solve a variety of psychological problems of their children. Sometimes the use of active listening only leads to a burst of emotions that have long accumulated in the child; in such cases, it turns out that the child needs only a sympathetic listener. Sometimes active listening helps the children to accept as appropriate the situation that they cannot change. In general, the method of active listening facilitates children's experiences, helps them to express their feelings and feel that they are understood. It is not necessary to wait for a serious problem to apply active listening. Children daily tell their parents about certain unpleasant feelings, and at such moments they most need their parents to understand their feelings [15, 82-87].

According to Thomas Gordon, putting active listening into practice requires some efforts. In the process of mastering this method, parents inevitably face difficulties and even defeats. But if they are constantly improving their skills, no matter how difficult it may seem to them, they gradually begin to notice the growth of their children's maturity and their progress towards independence. As a result, parents experience a qualitatively new level of satisfaction from communicating with their children [15, 71-72].

It should be remembered that there is something that frustrates and upsets all children in life. It can be related to their parents, relatives, teachers, friends or anyone else, or even to themselves. Following the expression of children's feelings, parents usually recognize such situations easily. Children, in turn, find support from their parents in solving their problems, stay healthy and become stronger and more confident. Unfortunately, children who do not find parental support can develop mental disorders. Therefore, active listening is most appropriate to use when the child informs

parents about their problems [15, 72-73].

As most parents are accustomed to appropriating their children's problems, it is difficult for them to agree with this concept at first. However, it should be noted that this contributes to the deterioration of their relationship with children, causes unnecessary suffering and deprives parents of the opportunity to become effective helpers of their children. Because, if parents agree that the problems belong to the children, it does not mean that they cannot worry and offer them help. In such situations, it is important to keep in mind that professional counseling psychologists are also genuinely concerned about each child they try to help. But, unlike most parents, they leave the responsibility for solving the problem to the child himself, because they see him as an individual and rely heavily on the child's internal resources, hoping for his ability to solve the problem on his own. Only because the child is given the opportunity to remain the owner of his problem, professional counselors are able to apply active listening effectively [15, 73-74].

From Thomas Gordon's point of view, some parents fail from the first attempt of using active listening. It happens because they want to use this method to make their children think the way they want. Many parents stick to the method of active listening as an effective means of manipulating children. Such parents are convinced that "managing" children means leading them in a certain direction and acting as a leader. Doing so, parents usually encounter resistance from their children. Therefore, it is important to remember that children are extremely sensitive and subconsciously understand that in most cases parental guidance can mean not accepting the children as they are. Parental control frightens the child, as his or her independence is threatened. Thus, active listening is not a means of accompanying the child in the direction desired by the parents [15, 94-96].

Some of the parents, using active listening for the first time, start by trying to open the "door" of communication for their children, but, because of the inability to stay in the role of active listener for a long time, then close it again. As soon as parents hear what they don't like, they stop listening to the child. However, by giving advice and teaching children, parents lose the opportunity to help them cope with their feelings and find a constructive solution to the problem on their own. Children, in turn, think that parents do not believe in their ability to understand the essence of what is happening and the ability to solve such problems independently [15, 96-97].

Thus, the "best" way to fail using active listening is to invite the children to express their feelings openly, and after that to demonstrate own thoughts and advice. Parents who do so are very quickly convinced that their children become distrustful and confident that their parents are calling them to openness only with the aim to criticize them later [15, 97-98].

According to Thomas Gordon's beliefs, in order to master active listening, parents need practice, because after receiving good instruction and performing special training exercises, most parents achieve a high level of skill in the application of active listening [15, 97-99].

The real danger for parents who are trying to master active listening on a theoretical level is the inability to feel complicity when trying to apply the method in practice. Complicity means the characteristic feature of communication, thanks to which the child understands that parents put themselves in his place and empathize with him. After all, everyone wants others not only to understand the

essence of what he says, but also to feel the feelings that he puts into the meaning of his words. Because children feel everything very subtly, most of their statements are accompanied by such feelings as joy, hatred, disappointment, tenderness, anxiety, anger, pride, sadness, and so on. When communicating with parents, children expect them to understand their feelings. If parents do not show complicity, children believe that their feelings remain unclear. Thus, the most common mistake parents make during the first use of active listening is the lack of an emotional component in children's reactions to expressions [15, 99-100].

Some parents are ashamed or afraid of their feelings, both their own and their children's, because they are forced to ignore the child's feelings and hide their own. Some of the parents are so afraid of feelings that they deliberately avoid their recognition, but there are also parents who are simply unable to recognize them in the statements of their children [15, 101].

Thomas Gordon emphasized the need to remember that feeling is not a pathology or a distortion, but an integral part of life. Although feelings appear and disappear, that is, they are transient due to parental approval and recognition, which are transmitted through active listening, the child is not harmed. Only by properly applying active listening, parents can help their children get rid of any negative emotions [15, 101-102].

Sometimes parents fail because they use active listening at the wrong time. This is because at some situations children are not ready to tell their parents about their feelings, but just want to stay alone. In such cases, parents should respect the children's right to be in their world of feelings and not impose communication on them [15, 102-103].

At times parents try to open the "door" through active listening, even though they do not have time to wait for the children to share their feelings. Such tactics is also detrimental to the relationship, because the child will inevitably feel that parents are not interested in what he tells them [15, 103].

By using active listening when it is inappropriate, some parents feel resistance from the child. The child may ask something, ask for advice or help, but not feel the need to describe the problem in detail. However, some parents are so fond of active listening that they use it even when the child is not going to reveal the secret of their feelings, but only wants to "speak out" [15, 103].

In such situations, children need help that is very different from that of active listening. The wrong reaction of parents to the actions of the child causes her irritation and frustration. Parents often continue to use active listening even after the child stops speaking. In such cases, children begin to worry. And although each child is able to show the appropriate signals, that is to make a dissatisfied facial expression, to shut up, to start fussing, to look at the clock constantly, etc., parents should definitely know when to stop.

Active listening pushes children to the first step in solving their problem, namely – to express their feelings and identify the problem. The next step for children is to take the initiative into their own hands and find a constructive solution to the problem [15, 104-105].

**Conclusions and prospects for further scientific research.** According to Thomas Gordon, active listening works wonders. It helps parents perceive the child's feelings, and the child – to solve problems on his own. Solving children's problems by parents almost inevitably leads to the loss of such an opportunity. It should be remembered that

active listening is also used as a way to respond to children's intellectual problems, as children are constantly trying to understand what they get to know, such as terrorism, crime, pollution, etc. [15, 90-91].

Very often parents are frightened by the unappealability with which children express their views or, conversely, their naivety and immaturity. As a rule, in such situations, parents are tempted to intervene and correct the child. The motivation of parents is either to promote the intellectual development of the child, or to demonstrate their own intellectual superiority. Unfortunately, in both cases, parental intervention inevitably leads to a verbal battle, the finale of which is offended feelings [15, 91-92].

From Thomas Gordon's point of view, through active listening, parents achieve incredible changes in communication with their children. Active listening turns the home into a place where complex and critical issues faced by children are discussed together. When parents complain that their children do not bring anything serious to the home discussion, it often turns out that the children are trying, but the parents actually hinder their attempts through traditional techniques such as instructions, notations, criticism or sarcasm, after which the children slowly begin to lower the

'curtain', which sometimes separates their inner world from the inner world of their parents for ever. The predominance of the generation gap in the modern family is explained by the fact that parents do not listen to their children, but, unfortunately, only preach, correct and ridicule their statements [15, 92-93].

Thus, family pedagogy is one of the psychological and pedagogical sciences, which determines the general patterns, content, principles, tasks, forms and methods, technological features, techniques and tools, the process and outcome of family upbringing of the younger generation, the transfer of family experience from older to younger ones, inheritance of social, family and personal values of generations [6].

Family upbringing is interpreted as a purposeful process of organizing the interaction of adults and children in the family in their joint creative activity, which stimulates the development and self-development of the latest perfect versatile qualities by providing the necessary conditions for effective functioning of mechanism of internal value-normative regulation of personality's behavior in the process of including it into the system of various interrelations, communication and livelihoods [6].

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