

## Topic of Conversation

We usually think we need to think up something to *talk* about to be a good conversationalist. Dale points out that it's really the opposite. The trick to being "interesting" and holding people's attention is think up something to *listen* about... from them. Getting them to talk about themselves, their interests, their accomplishments, their ambitions, or their experiences is a skill we all need. Then we must be willing to "listen intently" with "genuine interest."

Charles Eliot adds that we must pay "exclusive attention" to the person who's talking. We should stop what we're doing, and let our focus settle on the speaker - especially when it's our child. Don't let your eyes wander or check your watch as they're speaking. That tells them they are boring us and need to be quiet. The other word for what we're doing is "insulting" them. We need to be "active" listeners, giving feedback, asking for clarification, and turning the conversation back over to them. Ask interesting questions the other person will enjoy answering. Engage your mind.

If the conversation turns competitive, you can remain sympathetic without agreeing to what is being said. That's diplomacy at work. "Hmm. I see how you could feel that way." You don't need the "piercing eyes" of an owl. Just a gentle look and a quiet voice to encourage the other person to talk.

"People who talk only of themselves, think only of themselves." Our ambition is to help others by understanding their needs, and meeting them. Therefore the conversation necessarily has to be about them...

Simple proverb:

God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. Listen more than you speak and you will be everyone's delight.