

Read the text **Convenient Hearing** and think of the problems of communication that exist in the family. Use a dictionary when necessary.

Is it fair to call convenient hearing a teenage disease?

Convenient Hearing

(after Erma Bombeck)

That was the first time I observed my son with a case of convenient hearing.

I had called him six times to come to dinner. There was no answer. Finally, I went directly to his room. He was sitting on the floor in a fetal position. The record player was going full blast. The television set was up. He had a transistor cord in one ear and a telephone receiver in the other. He was teasing a barking dog with a sock between his toes.

He looked up slowly, made a peace sign with his fingers and said, "You know I can't hear you."

What I had suspected was true. My son heard what he wanted to hear. He turned on or turned out when he felt like hearing.

There were many incongruities². He could not hear the phone ring when he was leaning on it and you were in another room. If it was a girl calling for him, he heard it before it even rang. He could not hear the dog scratch when he wanted in or out. He could hear his friends talk and laugh twenty minutes away from the house. He could not hear you ask him to take out the rubbish when your lips touched his ear. He overheard your discussion of his report card when you talked in a whisper in the north-east corner of the garage. He could not hear his alarm clock in the morning. My neighbor Maxine couldn't understand our case of convenient hearing. "How do you communicate?" she asked one day over coffee. "We don't," I said "My son has only spoken four words to me all year." "What were they?" "It was last April. I was separating some eggs for a cake. As I dumped the yolk from one shell to another, I miscalculated and the egg slid down along the cupboard and onto my new kitchen carpet. My son was standing there watching. He looked at me and said, "Way to go, Mom."

"That was it?" "I was thrilled," I said. "I didn't think he even knew my name." "I don't see how you can raise him when you don't talk," she sighed. "There are ways", I said. "There's the old trick. I hang homemade posters and stickers around his room reading "HELP THE ECONOMY - TAKE A LEFTOVER TO LUNCH!" or "STAMP OUT POLLUTION IN YOUR AREA - SEND YOUR GYM SHOES OUT OF STATE". Of course, there's the ever-popular, "DON'T LET YOUR MORALS BE DROPOUTS (исчезать): SEE YOUR DENTIST AT 1:30 THURSDAY."

"Oh good grief," she said, "does it work?" "Most of the time. Of course, we have to get drastic on occasions and buy time on local rock stations to get through to him. This is how he found out we moved last April."

"I don't see how you have the patience to talk all the time to a boy who only listens at his own convenience."

"The beautiful thing about Convenient Hearing," I said, smiling, "is that it can be contagious. I can catch it too, you know. Like the other day, I was vacuuming the kitchen. The dryer buzzer was going off, the washer was pulsating, my favorite soap opera was on television. My son came out and said, "Hey, Mom, you got two dollars?" "I didn't move a muscle."

"Mom, did you hear me?" he shouted. "I need two dollars."

"Where's your purse?" "Finally, he unplugged all my appliances and put his face in mine. "Are you deaf?" "I pretended I could not understand, and said, "You know I can't hear you."

1. convenient – удобный
2. incongruity – несоответствие

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the author's son doing when she calls him for dinner?
2. How does the author feel about her son's "convenient hearing"?
3. What are some examples of things that the author's son can and cannot hear?
4. How does the author communicate with her son if he only listens at his own convenience?
5. Does the author's neighbor understand how she communicates with her son? Why or why not?
6. What are some examples of homemade posters and stickers that the author hangs in her son's room to communicate with him?
7. How does the author get through to her son when other methods of communication fail?
8. Can the author catch her son's "convenient hearing"? How does this happen?
9. What was the longest conversation the author had with her son, according to the text?
10. What is the author's attitude towards her son's "convenient hearing"?

Are these statements true or false according to the text.

Statements:

1. The son was listening to music when his mother called him for dinner.
2. The son was watching TV when his mother called him for dinner.
3. The son was not wearing any headphones when his mother called him for dinner.
4. The son could hear the phone ring when he was leaning on it.
5. The son could hear the dog scratch when he wanted in or out.
6. The son could hear his alarm clock in the morning.
7. The son spoke more than four words to his mother last year.
8. The mother communicates with her son by talking to him directly.
9. The mother hangs posters and stickers around her son's room to communicate with him.
10. The mother has never had to resort to buying time on local rock stations to communicate with her son.

Read a dialogue between the mother and her friend based on the text and discuss the problem.

Ann: So, what's the matter with your son?

Jen: He has this thing called Convenient Hearing.

Ann: What does it mean?

Jen: Well, he hears what he wants to hear and tunes everything else out. I've called him

many times to come down for dinner today, but no response.

Ann: That sounds frustrating.

Jen: It is! But he conveniently hears his friends' laughter miles away from our house, though.

Ann: Hmm...sounds like selective hearing. Have you tried talking to him about it?

Jen: Many times, but nothing seems to work on him. Even when I whisper in his ear asking him nicely to do something, he doesn't even budge.

Ann: I can imagine that would be hard as a parent. Maybe try finding ways to get through to him, like putting up posters or buying time on local radio stations?

Jen: Yeah, we've tried some of those methods, like hanging stickers around his room with messages to take leftovers to lunch or see his dentist at 1:30 pm Thursday. But sometimes we have to go to drastic measures to reach him - for instance, buying time on rock stations.

Ann: Oh, wow. Do you think he'll ever change?

Jen: Hard to say, but who knows? Maybe one day Convenient Hearing will become less catchy for him too!