

# Holy Listening Stones

Designed by: Rev. Dr. Leanne Hadley

## What are they?

Holy Listening Stones are a tool to help children put their feelings, insights and thoughts into words. They also help adults to remember to listen to what children express.

**First Steps Holy Listening Stones**  
Choose the stones that tell the story of your spirit, drag them around and play with them. When you are done, you can journal below!



## What do the symbols mean?

The symbols on the stones were deliberately chosen to have several meanings and leave the interpretation of their meaning up to each child. For example the stone that looks like the “tree” might be a symbol of new growth or strength. Or it can also be interpreted as a tree that is missing roots and ready to fall over. Or it can be seen as a bomb exploding. There is no correct meaning. Whatever the child shares is correct.

## Where can these be used?

The stones can be used in a variety of ways:

They can be used as a check-in time for the kids. Simply ask them to choose a stone that describes how they are feeling or how their week was.

They can be used to help upset children put their feelings into words. They are great to have on hand in case a child shares that someone they loved has died, their parents have split up or of they are having trouble in school.

They can be used following the Bible Story lesson at Sunday School, or VBS. Each child takes a turn choosing a stone and sharing how it relates to what they heard or felt in the story.

## Why are they called “Holy” listening stones?

I called the stones “Holy Listening Stones” because when we use them, we create a *sacred and holy space* and invite God to enter the space with us while the child shares. We are not the one who brings hope and healing... we allow God to do that! This work is based on the scripture found in Matthew 18:20, “*For where two are gathered in my name, I am there among them.*”

These stones can and are being used in secular settings such as by teachers working in public schools and in secular therapists' offices. I have no problem with them being called "Listening Stones." I trust that God will join us whenever we gather to do this caring work.

### **Why are these helpful?**

Because, without time to process, children often struggle to put their feelings and reactions into words. The Holy Listening Stones allow time for quiet reflection and time for the children to gather their thoughts. Sometimes children simply do not have the vocabulary to describe their feelings. Instead of asking a child to "tell you how they are feeling," you invite them to "show you." Children often think in pictures and symbols and the stones help them express themselves in ways that they might not be able to with words alone.

Holy Listening Stones also help the children to look inside themselves and discover their own unique thoughts instead of trying to please the teacher with the answer they think the teacher wants to hear and they help children to claim and commit to their own thoughts instead of feeling the pressure to mimic what their friends say.

### **Can they be used with adults?**

Yes and they have been used in a variety of settings with adults. Parents have used them to improve communication with their children. Teachers have used them to help children in public schools. Counselors have used them with people of all ages. They have been used in nursing homes, hospitals and in hospice settings. And they have been used in prisons. They can be used with all ages but they were created to be used with children since children primarily use drawings, pictures and symbols to express themselves. The stones allow children to express themselves in the language they are most comfortable using... symbolic language. Then after they formulate their thoughts, they can tell you with words.

### **How do I start?**

- 1) Decide how and where you want to use them.
- 2) Start by showing them to the children in your classroom and explain that they are a set of rocks to help them share together.
- 3) Tell them that there is no meaning for any rock, but rather whatever they see is what it means. You might want to show them the "Tree" rock and read what is written about them above.
- 4) Use them... play with them and discover how they can help you communicate and listen better as you work with the children.
- 5) The more you use them. The more comfortable the children will become with them and the more useful they will be to you.

♥ If you have any questions about the Holy Listening Stones, please feel free to call Rev. Dr. Leanne Hadley at 719-930-3598 or contact her through her website at [www.leanne-hadley.com](http://www.leanne-hadley.com).