

Activity: Active Listening

► PURPOSE

Active listening occurs when the “listener is genuinely interested in the speaker’s message. He or she sincerely wants to know what the speaker thinks, how the speaker feels, and what the speaker wants. The listener actively confirms that he or she understands these things before reacting. Active listening is an interactive process.”⁵

Instructions

Break into groups of three. Choose one person to be the following:

Speaker

Will respond to directions (i.e., assign Challenging Response from Activity).

Active Listener

Will practice the skills of active listening (i.e., assign question from the Staff Script).

Observer

Will quietly observe the interaction and summarize feedback.

The speaker will have 3 minutes to respond to the directions and the listener should assist the speaker with asking a few questions and paraphrasing.

Participants will switch roles so that each person has an opportunity to practice each.

Debrief and Reflect

In following the active listening rules, what were you aware of about yourself during the discussion?

How well do you think you paraphrased the speaker based on their reaction?

What would you like to do better next time?

Rules for Active Listening

Stop talking!

Listen with undivided, supportive and focused attention.

Put the other person at ease

Give them the space and time to speak.

Listen to understand the other person and their words

Do not just wait for your turn.

Remove distractions

Being focused means that you are willing to stop other activities.

Be patient

Sometimes it takes a moment to find the right words.

Be aware of your own emotions

As we get emotional, it is often more difficult to concentrate on what is being said and we may miss critical parts.

Paraphrase what was said

Be sure you have understood.

Assist the speaker in staying on time and task

If there is confusion, or you need more information, be sure to convey this to the speaker

Ask for clarification or ask the speaker to rephrase what was said in another way.

Maintain eye contact and be conscious of body language

Sit up straight, facing toward the speaker. Remain relaxed with your arms uncrossed.

Do your best to remain empathetic and non-judgmental

Do not debate

Do not interrupt with your own comments or stories.

Continue to concentrate on what is being said, even when you disagree