

ACTIVE LISTENING



When people talk to you, do you *really* hear what they say? *Active listening* focuses entirely on what the other person is saying and confirms understanding of both the content of the message and the emotions and feelings underlying the message.

Here are some guidelines for active listening:

- Maintain relaxed but attentive posture and comfortable eye contact.
- Listen for feelings that may be expressed or implied as well as the facts being stated.
- Reflect, clarify or paraphrase what the person has said to ensure that you understand his/her concern.
- Convey a sense of welcoming acceptance and respect, trying not to show annoyance or restlessness.
- Be genuine, real and self-disclosing when appropriate. Show you are engaged when listening to others.
- Be empathetic to the concern that the person attaches to the problem. Place yourself in his/her position.
- Ask questions that seem pertinent in order to get a clear, concise understanding of the problem. Try not to jump to conclusions and judgments.
- Lead with “door openers” that allow the person to think about and to express his/her thoughts. Open-ended questions are useful in the active listening process.
- Actively support and encourage the person by offering help through available resources and reassurance.
- Give specific information when possible or offer assistance with finding relevant information.
- Consistently evaluate the impact of what you say: “Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?”
- *Silence is golden*. Help ease anxiety by conveying acceptance, trust and the message that you are *actively* listening.

“Active Listening: hearing, engaging, understanding.”