

Active Listening

Listening vs. Hearing

- Hearing: “The process, function, or power of receiving sounds.”
- Listening: “to pay attention in order to hear.”

How do I listen “Actively?”

- Stop Talking! You cannot listen when you are talking...you are only thinking about what you are going to say next!
- Relax, smile, provide eye contact. Look and act interested and remove distractions such as other people, cell phones, etc.
- Pay attention to your non-verbal’s (see below).
- Listen for what is NOT said. Not everything a person means is stated. There may be some things that are below the surface.
- Reflect back what you think you heard. “It seems like...” or “I think you are telling me...”
- Listen to understand, not oppose. You don’t have to agree with what is said to be an effective listener.
- What are the feelings involved in the conversation? Be aware of the other’s non-verbal’s.
- Be patient and don’t interrupt. Don’t finish the person’s sentences for them.
- Don’t let your own emotions interfere with listening.

Active Listening in Groups

- Look for cues that others wish to speak.
- Ask other member in the group to speak (especially if they haven’t spoken yet) and encourage others to please pay attention to clarify and involve the group. “Billy just made a good point. Does anyone else want to share a similar experience?”

Steps for Active Listening

- Reflect the content back. “So you just had an argument with your supervisor?”
- Reflect the feeling. “it seems that you are feeling really anxious about that.”
- Partializing. Breakdown the information into similar parts. “So let’s first talk about what your supervisor said that made you feel anxious.”
- Supportive Denial. Reject a request, but supply other options. “I’m sorry, but I can’t talk to you supervisor for you, but maybe we can figure out some ways to help you talk to her.”
- Summarizing. Summarize what was said, what will be done and who will do it. “I agree that we should let this simmer for a day so it isn’t so emotional. I’ll get some background information and you will go and talk to your supervisor tomorrow about what happened.”

Non-Verbal Communication & Listening

The Following are areas to be aware of with your “non-verbal” communication with listening actively:

- Posture: Are you leaning forward, fidgeting, cross-legged, reclined, etc. Good posture would be comfortable and leaning slightly forward.
- Gestures: Should be non-threatening and not distracting to the person speaking.
- Eye contact: It should be direct, but not sustained in a threatening way.
- Physical Space: Be aware of how close or far you are from the speaker.
- Voice tone, pitch, volume, etc.: Each can influence the message being relayed.
- Voice speed: Be deliberate and not overly slow or fast with your words.