

Active Listening

Active listening is essential to effective communication and is a vital part of conflict resolution. In active listening, judgment is suspended and the listener uses empathy to try to understand the speaker's experience, feelings, and viewpoint. The main principles of active listening include:



Encourage

Draw the other person out. Use verbal/non-verbal cues to show that you are really listening.	Convey attentiveness with body language and short vocal responses. Be aware that appropriate body language and vocalizations vary from culture to culture.
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Clarify

Ask questions to confirm what the speaker has said. Not only will this help you understand, but it also may help the speaker examine their own perceptions.	Example: "Could you tell me which of those things happened first?" "I'm still not sure I understand why that made you so upset. Could you explain again?"
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Restate

Repeat in your words what the speaker has said. This shows you are listening and helps check for facts and meaning.	Example: "So she said she would call back and then she called two days later."
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Reflect

Tell the speaker what you think he/she is experiencing. This can lead the speaker to be more expressive. It also provides a way to check the accuracy of your perceptions.	Example: "You said what she did hurt a lot. It sounds like you really felt humiliated. Do I have that right?"
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Summarize

Reiterate the major ideas, themes, and feelings the speaker has expressed. This provides review and a basis from which to continue the dialogue.	Example: "So the main problems you have with this are..."
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Validate

Show appreciation for the speaker's efforts; acknowledge the value of talking; affirm your positive feelings about being part of the dialogue.	Example: "I'm really glad we're talking." "It makes me feel good that you confided in me."
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