

Active Listening

Listening Is Your Best Companion In Supporting This Community

Excellent listening skills lay the groundwork for successful interactions. It enhances relationships, reduces misunderstandings, and fosters empathy. This document is intended to discuss the nuances of active and empathetic listening.

Types of Listening

Active listening is interactive, responsive, and useful for problem-solving and relationship-building.

Empathetic listening is calm, non-judgmental, and supportive, especially during emotional moments or crises.

Active

Engaged and Responsive: involves being fully present and engaged in the conversation

Verbal and Non-Verbal: It focuses on both verbal cues (what is said) and non-verbal cues (tone, body language, etc.)

Techniques: Active listeners use techniques like paraphrasing, asking clarifying questions, and showing empathy

Goal: The goal is to understand the speaker's message and respond thoughtfully.

Example: Nodding while someone speaks, asking follow-up questions, and summarizing what you've heard.

Empathetic

Quiet and Attentive: emphasizes quiet attentiveness without interruption.

Non-Verbal: It primarily involves non-verbal cues, such as maintaining eye contact and showing patience.

Presence: The listener is there to listen, without necessarily actively responding or offering solutions.

Goal: The goal is to create a safe space for the speaker to express themselves fully.

Example: Sitting quietly while someone shares their feelings, allowing them to express without interruption

When To Use Each Style

When to use Active Listening:

1. **During Conversations:** Use active listening when you want to fully engage in a conversation, understand the speaker's message, and respond thoughtfully.
2. **Problem-Solving:** Active listening is effective when seeking solutions, making decisions, or collaborating with others.
3. **Building Relationships:** It helps build trust, empathy, and stronger connections.

When to use Empathetic Listening:

1. **Supportive Moments:** Use empathetic listening when someone needs emotional support or wants to express themselves without interruption.
2. **Therapeutic Settings:** It's valuable during therapy, counseling, or when someone shares personal experiences.
3. **Crisis or Distress:** Empathetic listening creates a safe space during difficult times.

How To Use Each Style

Listening isn't just about hearing words—it's about being fully present and engaged in the conversation. Let's explore how you can foster listening skills:

Active

1. **Be Fully Present**
2. **Notice Non-Verbal Cues**
3. **Avoid Offering Solutions Unless Asked**
4. **Reflect and Paraphrase**
5. **Ask Open-Ended Questions**
6. **Avoid Interrupting or Judging**
7. **Summarize Key Points**
8. **Respond to Feelings**

Empathetic

1. **Be Fully Present**
2. **Notice Non-Verbal Cues**
3. **Avoid Offering Solutions Unless Asked**
9. **Practice Patience**
10. **Do Not Interrupt**

1. **Be Fully Present:** Give your undivided attention during conversations. Minimize distractions (put away phones, close irrelevant tabs, etc.). Maintain eye contact and show genuine interest.
2. **Notice Non-Verbal Cues:** Pay attention to more than just words. Observe tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and body language. These cues convey emotions and deeper meanings.
3. **Avoid Offering Solutions Unless Asked:** Respect the speaker's autonomy by refraining from jumping to solutions prematurely. Instead, focus on actively listening and understanding their perspective before offering advice or solutions.
4. **Reflect and Paraphrase:** Paraphrase what the speaker said to demonstrate understanding. Reflect back their feelings or attitudes.
5. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Engage the speaker in meaningful dialogue by asking questions that encourage elaboration and exploration of their thoughts and feelings. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no," allowing for deeper conversation and understanding.
6. **Avoid Interrupting or Judging:** Withhold judgment and remain open-minded. Let the speaker express themselves fully without interruption. Create a safe space for sharing.
7. **Summarize Key Points:** Recap the main ideas and themes expressed by the speaker to confirm understanding and provide clarity. By summarizing, you demonstrate active listening and help ensure that everyone is on the same page.
8. **Respond to Feelings:** When appropriate, address the emotional aspect of what was shared. Show empathy and understanding. Validate the speaker's feelings to establish a connection.
9. **Practice Patience:** Allow the speaker to express themselves fully without rushing or pushing for quick resolutions. Cultivate a sense of calm and understanding, even in moments of discomfort or frustration.
10. **Do Not Interrupt:** Refrain from cutting off the speaker mid-sentence or interjecting with your own thoughts. Let them finish speaking before responding to ensure they feel heard and valued.

Cues & Rewards

Non-Verbal Cues

1. **Eye Contact:** It shows that you're engaged and interested in what they're saying.
2. **Facial Expressions:** Observe the speaker's facial expressions. A serious expression may indicate important information, while a light-hearted one might signal humor or ease.
3. **Posture and Gestures:** Your posture matters. Leaning forward demonstrates attentiveness. Hand movements can convey interest and involvement.
4. **Tone of Voice:** Listen not only to the words but also to the tone. Calm, nervous, excited, or intense tones provide additional context.

Verbal Rewards

"Please continue"

"Tell me more"

"Oh?"

"Yes"

"Sure"

"Go on"

"I hear you"

"Really?"

Repeating the last word can also be effective. [Person] I am feeling sad. [You] Sad?