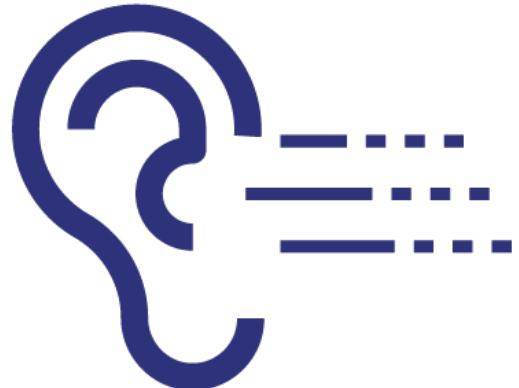


ACTIVE LISTENING

Try out listening strategies



OBJECTIVES

- Students will review effective active listening skills
- Students will identify active listening skills in action

MATERIALS

- [Active Listening Handout](#)

TIME

- 45 min

LESSON INTRO

We spend more time listening than any activity except breathing. How can we do it better?

Active listening is a process in which the listener takes active responsibility to understand the content and feeling of what is being said and then checks with the speaker to see if they heard what the speaker intended to communicate.

LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Say: We spend more time listening than any activity except breathing.
2. Ask the group to briefly share out the different things they listen to throughout the day and record their responses on the board.
If students say “people talking,” push them to break it down into the different things people talk about, such as how to do a math problem, what’s for lunch, a friend’s weekend, another person’s memory, a boss’s instructions, etc...
3. Once you have a short list, ask the class to rank this list in order of importance from what you **do** need to listen closely to, to things that you **don’t** have to listen closely to.
4. Explain that as a ‘listener,’ they take an active role to truly hear and understand. Refer to the top portion of the brainstorm list—the important things. Ask students to pair-share with this question: *What problems might arise when people don’t listen well in these scenarios?*
5. After a few minutes, ask groups to share out a main idea from their discussion.
6. Say: We’re going to spend some time talking about what you can do to be a good listener. Listening is hard work! And we want to know what to do to make sure we’re getting the right information.

In general, listening skills fall under a few categories: (write these on the board)

- What your physical body is *doing*.
- What you are *watching* for.
- What you can *say* as a listener.

7. Say: You may already know or do some things that fall into these categories. Share out!

As students share, create lists under each category of examples of each type of listening.

8. Pass out the Active Listening handout. Read aloud, or have students read silently. Ask students to mark 3 strategies that they feel comfortable doing already. Ask students to mark 2 strategies that are new to them, but they would be willing to try.

9. Next, share with students that you are going to model a few of the active listening strategies. As you model, ask students to write down things that you are doing or saying that are examples of active listening skills. They should be prepared to share out these examples afterwards. Students should reference the handout and student-created lists as resources while they observe.

10. Invite one student up to role model with you. This student should be comfortable speaking in front of the class. You can ask one of the prompts, or just talk about a topic of interest to them.

- Tell me about a recent vacation or trip
- Tell me about something that you hate doing
- Tell me about the problem you're having
- Tell me about what it's like to be an only child/oldest child/middle child/youngest child

As the student speaks, model great active listening by your body positioning, eye contact, rephrasing, mirroring, emotion ID, and questioning. Then, share out your observations of the student's body language and tone.

Use phrases such as:

- "It sounds like what you mean is... Is that right?"
- "Are you saying that you're angry/disappointed/glad, because...?"
- "Tell me more about..."
- "Really?"
- "It seems like..."

11. Once you've wrapped up the 'conversation' ask students to share out examples of active listening that they observed.

VARIATIONS

1. Pair this lesson with the lesson on "Communication Goes Two Ways." These two lessons paired together can serve to help students experience the frustration of being in a 'poor listening environment.' Missed information impacts the outcome of the activity.

REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. End this lesson with the opportunity for students to practice active listening strategies. Pair up students (or group in triads) and give students either the speaker or listener role. Allow time for students to try out a few of the skills. Acknowledge that practicing these skills can feel funny in the moment, but they should push through and try it out! They might be surprised at what they find!
2. Spend a few moments in solo reflection, students can journal their ideas to one or all the following prompts:
 - How did it feel to be an active listener?
 - Did anything feel uncomfortable? Why?
 - What was that experience like for you when you were the speaker? Did anything surprise you?
 - What strategy can you do this week to practice being a better listener?
3. Have students create an Info Graphic for the active listening skills that student identify--such as the one here from the [Center for Creative Leadership](#). Place these in the class or communal areas.



NOTES

Educational Standards: CASEL: Relationship Skills, CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Social Awareness, P21: Communication and Collaboration, P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, CCRS:SL3 Evaluate Perspective and Evidence, CCRS:SL6 Adapt Speech

ACTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

Body Language

These are non-verbal behaviors that help others know you're listening, and help you focus in. Eye-contact, facing the person speaking, an open body stance, nodding, smiling, and putting away phones or other distractions sends the message that you are paying attention and helps you to be an active listener.

Small Encouragements

These are sounds made to let a person know the other is there and listening. Such as, "Oh?", "When?", and "Really?", "Mmmm". They are questions, comments, or sounds that do not interfere with the flow of conversation but do let others know that you are there and listening. These small encouragements help build trust and encourage others to continue talking.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a summary in your own words of what you were told. This demonstrates listening and helps creates empathy because it is evident that you have heard and are trying to understand. Paraphrasing clarifies information, highlights important topics, and promotes give and take between you and the speaker. Plus, it helps make you a better listener!

Usually, paraphrasing begins with the words, "Are you telling me..." or "Are you saying..."

Emotion Labeling

This is often the first active listening skill to be used. It is important to tune in to the emotion behind the words and facts. It is a common mistake to get into problem-solving too early. By problem-solving too early, you have likely not listened enough to get all of the information you need, and the other person is often not ready to solve the problem yet. It's ok to make a mistake in labeling emotions. The other person will correct you and will often be grateful for the attempt to understand them.

Common phrases for you to use are, "Are you feeling...", "You sound...", "You seem...", "I hear...(emotion heard by you)". You do not tell people how they are feeling, but how they sound to you.

Mirroring (or Reflecting)

This is the technique of repeating the last word or phrase and putting a question mark after it. This provides very exact responses because you are using the other person's own words. Reflecting or mirroring allows you to ask the speaker for more information without you guiding the direction of the other persons thoughts. It can get information when you do not have enough to ask a good question. It is useful when you are at a loss for words and it provides an opportunity for the subject to think about what they have said.

Open-Ended Questions

The primary use of open-ended questions is to help a subject start talking. Asking open-ended questions encourages the person to say more. They are questions that cannot be answered with a single word such as "yes" or "no". Open-ended questions usually begin with *how*, *what*, *when* and *where*. Note that "why" questions are not asked directly. "Why" questions tend to steer the conversation toward blame and shut down communication. "Why" questions also tend to pass judgment. Closed-end questions give a feeling of interrogation that makes trust building difficult.

Silence

This begins with waiting until the speaker has completely finished talking, and then pausing. Often people need time to keep thinking to sort out their thoughts. Silence can be very effective on a number of levels. Most people are not comfortable with silence and will fill it with talk. It is to your advantage to keep others talking. Silence can also be used to emphasize a point. You can use silence just before or just after saying something important.

Adapted from *On-Scene Guide for Crisis Negotiators*, Frederick J. Lanceley, Boca Raton, CRC Press, 1999, pp 20-24.

