



# ACTIVE LISTENING



## Active listening is useful to:

- cultivate trust in a relationship.
- to let the other person know that you understand what you they are is saying.
- let the other person know that you care.
- encourage the other person to “open up” and continue sharing about him or herself.
- help the other person sort out thoughts and feelings and perhaps resolve a problem.

## Active listening is not:

- Giving advise
- Mechanical
- Judging, evaluating, criticizing, or praising
- confronting
- Telling your own story
- Agreeing or disagreeing

## Aspects of Active Listening

### Non-verbal body language

Indicates you are attentive: stop other activities which may be distracting.  
Look at the person talking, use good eye contact.  
Saying “uh huh” and “mmm” can let the other person know you are following what he or she is saying.

### Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing consists of repeating in your own words the meaning of speaker’s messages back to them.  
This can let someone know that you heard a person’s words and that you understand them. Sometimes its helpful to repeat the last few words or ideas verbatim.

### Naming the Feelings

This allows you to tentively suggest the feelings expressed or implied by a speaker’s words and actions. Such naming shows that you are paying attention to the emotional aspects of what they are conveying.  
When done carefully, you can identify the issues and feelings that underlie a person’s behavior.

## Some helpful phrases to use

- Sounds like you feel...
- You think...
- What I hear you say is...
- It appears that you...

## Keep in mind

Focus on listening to the entire question before beginning to formulate an answer.  
Observe how things are said – the emotions and attitudes behind the words may be more important than what is actually said.

Look beyond the mere words the speaker uses – remember that much information is displayed in voice intonation and body language.

Try to capture as accurately as possible, the information that the speaker is conveying.

Remember to appreciate that understanding is not equivalent to agreeing.

Remain as relaxed as you can. It is physiologically impossible to be both relaxed and anxious at the same time, so focus on being relaxed and develop skills that will help in these situations.

Acknowledging the other person's perspective and their concerns shows respect (and usually results in reciprocal behavior).

Always communicate a desire for a “win-win” outcome, again recognizing the needs of the other person.

## Blocks to Communication:

Ordering, Directing, Demanding, Dismissing, Discounting, Avoiding, Warning, Admonishing, Threatening, Moralizing, Preaching, Advising, Giving Suggestions or Solutions, Teaching, Instructing, Controlling, Judging, Criticizing, Blaming, Praising, Buttering Up, Name-Calling, Ridiculing, Shaming, Interpreting, Diagnosing, Psychoanalyzing, Reassuring, Sympathizing, Humoring, Probing, Interrogating, Diverting, Distracting

## Actions That Enhance Communication:

Caring, Appreciation, Open Body Language, Encouragement, Active Listening, Name the Feelings, Validation of the Speaker’s Perspective, Open-ended Questions, “I” Messages, Effective Pauses, Empathy, Respect, Patience