

“WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO AGREE AND DISAGREE CIVILLY”

HELPFUL TOOLS ON ACTIVELY LISTENING IN CONVERSATIONS

Actively listening is a careful, structured process of intentionally listening to what someone is saying and effectively responding.

Active listening is great to use when

- You are listening one-on-one with a friend or peer about an issue or dispute, or mediating a dispute between two people
- Listening to a presenter, guest speaker or teacher in order to more actively comprehend material
- Learning something new!

Using active listening skills means:

- Listening not just with your ears but also with your eyes and other senses
- Encouraging the train of thought by the person you are listening to completely before responding, not agreeing or disagreeing
- Being attentive and using positive body language, like leaning forward and not having your arms crossed. This will encourage the person to share their thoughts and feelings more openly without feeling judged
- Demonstrating genuine interest in what the person is saying. Again, it doesn't mean you have to agree with what they are saying, but that you *understand* what they are saying

Helpful References:

Study Guides & Strategies – www.studygs.net

Some helpful suggestions in being able to listen actively...

Be Other-Directed: Focus on the person speaking by following and understanding him/her as if you were walking in that person's shoes.

Be Aware: Non-verbally acknowledge points in the speech by nodding your head, smiling, and maintaining eye contact. Let the argument, discussion or presentation by the speaker fully run its course without interrupting or doing other things (i.e. doodling, making notes, etc.).

Be Involved: Actively respond to questions and directions given by the speaker, and cater to the needs of the speaker in any way possible (e.g. If they ask you to sit down, sit).

Set Boundaries: If the conversation involves settling a dispute or mediating between two people, ensure that you set boundaries at the start. Examples could be that both sides are not to interrupt the other person until they are completely finished addressing their point, or they are to not use put-downs or personal attacks.

Once the speaker has thoroughly finished speaking and sharing their point(s)...

Give the speaker space: Allow them an opportunity to pause for a moment, once they have finished. Provide them with the space to rest and breathe, before immediately responding.

Appreciate them: Thank them for being able to share their perspective, opinion, or information. Thanking them or saying “I appreciate that you shared this with me”, allows the opportunity for them to build trust in the fact that you genuinely heard them. Encourage dialogue should they immediately think of anything else to share that they previously didn't mention.

Double-check speaker's feelings:

Most importantly, ensure that you are not misunderstanding any information that he/she has just shared. Best ways to do this are:

- **Restate and summarize** key points shared to affirm your understanding (eg. “What I hear you saying is...”, “What I understand is...”)
- **Ask (non-threatening) questions** to build an understanding or for clarification.

Share your Perspective: Reflect on your experience to demonstrate interest or provide feedback. Interpret only after you feel you have grasped the content, and use “I Statements” to share your feelings/perspective (refer to the Respect “I Statements” handout for more information!)



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