

WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

Active Listening is:

1. The ability to understand another person's feelings.
2. Acceptance that feelings are always legitimate ones; they are never right or wrong.
3. Sensitivity to another person's feelings and emphasizing the validity of these feelings.
4. Noticing the attitudes and feelings involved in their message.
5. Restating what you hear the person say to encourage clarification and show that you are listening. When restating what they said, use words that are different from the speaker without changing their meaning.
6. Do not add or subtract from the sender's message. Deal with the feelings you hear instead of staying with the facts.
7. Do not respond with your own message. Examples: evaluating, sympathizing, giving opinions, using logic or persuasion, analyzing, advising, ordering or questioning.

BENEFITS OF ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening:

- Frees people of troublesome feelings when they express them openly.
- Helps people become less afraid of negative feelings.
- Promotes a feeling of understanding between and among people.
- Facilitates a person's own problem solving.
- Keeps the ownership of the problem with the person involved.
- Provides a "sounding board" for a person to talk through his/her problems without fear of judgment.

ACTIVE LISTENING “DOS” AND “DONTs”

<u>When listening, DO:</u>	<u>When listening, DO NOT:</u>
Show interest	Argue
Be understanding	Interrupt
Express empathy	Pass judgment
Single out the problem or issue	Give advice
Listen for causes of a problem	Jump to conclusions
Help the speaker associate cause with effect	Let your emotions react with the speaker’s emotions
Be silent when necessary	Tell your own story

ACTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES:

<u>Techniques</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Possible Responses</u>
Open-ended Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explores a person's statement without requiring an individual to respond with a simple "yes" or "no" 2. When a person is asked an open-ended question, it helps him/her think through his/her problem more deeply and provide more detail. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Can you tell me more ...?' 2. 'What do you think about...?'
Clarifying	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gets additional facts 2. Helps the person explore all sides of a problem 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Can you clarify this?' 2. 'Do you mean this?' 3. 'Is this the problem as you see it?'
Restatement or Paraphrasing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Checks the meaning and interpretation with the speaker 2. Shows you are listening and that you understand what the speaker has said 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'As I understand it, your plan is ..' 2. 'You have decided to ... and you say you are doing this because ...'
Neutral	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conveys you are interested and listening 2. Encourages the person to continue talking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'I see.' 2. 'I understand.' 3. 'That is a good point.'
Reflective	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shows that you understand how the speaker feels about what s/he is saying 2. Helps the person evaluate and temper his or her own feelings as expressed by someone else 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'You feel that ...' 2. 'It was shocking as you saw it.' 3. 'You felt you didn't get a fair hearing because...'
Summarizing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brings all the discussion into focus in terms of a summary 2. Serves as a spring board to discuss new aspects of the problem 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'These are the key ideas you have expressed...' 2. 'If I understand how you feel about the situation...'
Body Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shows the speaker you are listening 2. Indicates interest in what the person is saying 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain appropriate eye contact 2. Orient your body towards the speaker 3. Nod when appropriate

Active listening is not:	because...
ordering or commanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it disregards other's feelings - it creates resentment
warning or threatening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it produces fear - it invites the other person to test your limits
moralizing or preaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it produces guilt - it arouses defenses
advising or solving problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it shows lack of confidence in the person's own judgment
criticizing or blaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it makes a person feel belittled, rejected, inferior
interpreting or assuming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it encourages people not to communicate - it makes the speaker feel unjustly accused

"You" messages -We send people many "you" messages about their behavior. These messages sound dictatorial, create defensiveness on the part of the person to whom we are talking, and create a resistance to change. "You" messages are usually orders or commands (" You must eat") , blaming or name-calling statements (" you drive me crazy." "You never cared about me.") or statements that give solutions or deny a person's feelings ("You should move to a retirement home." "You shouldn't feel...") The worst "you" message is the "if...then" threat (If you don't...then I will...")

Adequately expressing your thoughts and feelings to another person 'is only one part of effective communication. You also need to actively listen and empathize -sense and understand the feelings and emotional needs of another. The worst thing to say to a person is "You shouldn't feel..." or "There's no reason for you to feel..."

If you listen actively, the person to whom you are listening feels your care and concern. When older people experience changes and losses, they may experience many feelings - fear, anger, grief, helplessness, and frustration. Having someone who is willing to listen and understand their feelings make it easier for people to talk openly about their situation, concerns and feelings.

ROADBLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION

Below is a list of common responses used when someone asks for help with a problem. These responses generally are considered unhelpful and can lead to a breakdown in communication. Volunteers are encouraged to use active listening techniques in order to help the older adult solve their own problems.

1. **Reassuring--** Denies that a problem exists.
("Oh, things aren't so bad...you'll be fine.")
2. **Persuading, Arguing, Lecturing--** You know the "right" answer and you go to great lengths to have the person agree with you.
("The facts are...I know I am right because...")
3. **Judging, Criticizing--** You assume the other person is wrong without knowing all the facts. You jump to negative conclusions and make the person feel stupid or wrong.
(" You are wrong...That is a stupid idea. ")
4. **Advising, Suggesting, Providing Solutions--** The solutions seem obvious to you and you are not willing to listen to the problems. You expect others to follow your advice.
(" You ought to...Why don't you just...What I would do is...")
5. **Approving, Praising--**It is nice to compliment, but it is inappropriate when it makes it difficult for the person to bring up uncertainties about the plan.
("Good, I think you should... That's great, go ahead...")
6. **Distracting, Withdrawing--** You change the subject and brush off the problem as unimportant because you are uncomfortable or do not want to talk about it.
("Let's go for a drive and forget about it...Now's not the time...")
7. **Analyzing, Interpreting--** You diagnose the problem eliminating the opportunity to elaborate their feelings or plans.
("Maybe they don't need your help...The problem is...")
8. **Moralizing, Preaching-** You assume the person should have the same values or beliefs as you.
("You should...You are supposed to...the right thing to do is...")
9. **Comparing--**Other problems are not as serious as yours. You talk more than listen.
("I know how you feel, I...when I was young...")
10. **Rehearsing--** You are busy thinking about what to say next and do not listen to what is being said.
(" Another thing...")

THOUGHTS ABOUT TRULY BEING A HELPER

Carolyn Parker

1. Seek to understand the other person's world. Be aware of and be sensitive to the limitations, problems, anxieties and the hopes, possibilities and aspirations that form the context of the person's life and thoughts. Be appropriate.
2. Acknowledge your own needs (to be recognized, appreciated, etc.) Don't deny your needs, but don't let them dominate the relationship.
3. Communicate interest and warmth from the beginning.
4. Be congruent. Let your words, your face, your posture, convey the care and respect you intend to convey.
5. Don't expect equal response. You are not likely to receive immediate pay-off for your efforts. Be prepared for that.
6. Information seeking is appropriate. You must learn to ask open questions that call for more information than yes or no.
7. Probing for feelings is also appropriate, if done with gentleness and respect.
8. Don't create a credibility gap by displaying doubts. Seek areas of trust.
9. Recognize that you can never be totally empathetic.
10. Respect silence. Silence can be enriching, productive, meaningful. Don't feel that you must be talking at all times.
11. Being truly present with a person is more meaningful than doing for them.
12. Learn to listen. A helpful technique in that process is to reflect back to the person what you heard them say.
13. Listen for repeated themes. You can believe that the message people want and need to convey will be there. Listen for it.
14. The goal of righteous helpfulness is the empowerment of others. Making others dependent upon you is false and unhelpful.
15. The helper is not responsible for making it all work.
16. Be alert to identify the strengths and potential of the other person.
17. Show warmth at the closure of a time together.

LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me
And you start giving advice,
You have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,
You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me
And you have to do something to solve my problems,
You have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen!
All I asked was that you listen-
Not to talk or do -just hear me.
Advice is cheap: a quarter will get both Dear Abby and
Billy Graham in the same newspaper.

And, I can do for myself. I'm not helpless;
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless;
And, when you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,
You contribute to my fear and weakness.

But, when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,
No matter how irrational,
Then I can quit trying to convince you
And get to the business of understanding
What's behind this irrational feeling.

And, when that's clear,
The answers are obvious and I don't need advice.
Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works -sometimes -for some people.
Because God is mute. He doesn't give advice or try to fix things.
He just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

So please, just listen and hear me.
If you want to talk,
Wait a minute for your turn
And I'll listen to you.

ANONYMOUS