
ACTIVE LISTENING

— Starts with Noticing —



Listening is a part of Inner and Outer Noticing

“The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. There is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.”

– RD Laing

There are Many Types of Listening

We must listen with an open heart, an open mind, paying full attention.

“We see, hear, or sense in others what our psyches wish for us to experience.”

— From Lead More, Control Less, Weisbord & Janoff

Value of Active Listening

- Helps us be adaptable in working with others
- Offers problem solving support for an individual
- Builds trust
- Develops a pattern of interaction in the community
- Can evolve into freely offering advice

Active Listening is the ability to focus completely on a speaker, understand their message, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully.

Keys for the listener:

- Listen with all of the senses
- Use of verbal and non-verbal messages
 - Use eye contact, nodding or smiling
 - Match the speaker's energy, pace of speech, or body language
 - Say yes or "mmm hmm"
- Model patience
 - Use pauses, moments of silence
 - Allow speaker to express what the issue is without interruption

Active listening is designed to help a speaker process a situation with a “supportive” other.

- Personal outcomes of active listening
 - Understanding
 - Trust
 - Confidence

Active listening may be specific to a form of interaction that has different names:

Imago is a skill taught by Harville Hendrix. The focus is on building communication skills for marital partners. Imago comes from Latin for “image” and Hendrix teaches that we are capable of communicating with partners in a way that maintains familiar love like the image of love we developed during childhood.

Mirroring is an essential component of active listening.

- Listener is the **receiver**
- The listener's ego gets out of the way
- When mirroring, knowledge of social styles may be helpful to the listener (and speaker)
- Personal knowledge of the speaker helps listener subtly mirror gestures
- Advice or judgment is only given if asked for.

Active listening can be used to share a complaint in some circumstances, especially after trust has been built. This can be found in a program entitled, "Safe Conversations."

The Steps to use in Active Listening:

MIRRORING: Listener mirrors back by asking if they understood or heard correctly

VALIDATING: Listener lets the speaker know that what they said makes sense and is understood without judgment

EMPATHIZING: Listener provides genuine empathy

SUMMARIZING: Listener summarizes the speaker's situation and thoughts. May end in, **"Is that it?"**

Let's Give Active Listening a Try

