

Effective Communication Skills - Active Listening

People need to feel that their concerns are heard. Occasionally when we are speaking, we may not be aware that the person to whom we are talking is not completely attentive to what we are saying. He/she may be simply hearing our words but not really listening for full understanding.

Effective communication includes:

- active listening
- choosing our words carefully, and
- matching our words with our body language.

There is a difference between hearing and listening:

- Hearing is the physical ability to receive sound. Listening is a learned skill to be developed through practice.
- Active listening is an important skill. It encourages others to talk to you in a way that ensures that you understand completely what they are trying to say.

Active Listening involves:

1. Paraphrasing content - restate basic ideas and facts in your own words.
 "What I hear you saying is that you weren't asked."
 "So, you weren't asked about this."
2. Reflecting Emotion - restate what you think the other person is feeling.
 "So, you are angry about what happened?"
3. Open Questioning - ask questions that begin with "what," "how," "when," and "where," and avoid questions that begin with "why."
 "What happened after you spoke with her?"
 "How did that make you feel?"
4. Summarizing - restate the central ideas and feelings you have heard.
 "Let's see if I have this straight..."
 "So basically what is most important to you is..."

Communication Skills

Active Listening

Name: _____

Activity 2:

Do this activity with a partner, sitting face to face. Take turns being the talker and listener.

One of you starts by telling something that is going on in your life. Keep it brief, about 20 to 30 seconds.

The listener's job is to think of different responses to what was said by using each of the Active Listening techniques:

- Restating/Paraphrasing basic ideas in your own words
- Restating/Reflecting what you think the other person is feeling
- Open questioning to clarify and get more details
- Summarizing by restating the main ideas and feelings you have heard

Switch roles, and do it again.

Comment below on the experience.

NOTE: Practising active listening skills will probably feel awkward at first. Like any new skill, it doesn't come naturally unless you practice enough for it to become a habit.

Comments:

Talking So People Will Listen

"Nobody listens to me," says Jenna. "Really. Even when I have something important to say, nobody ever listens. Maybe it's me, but I don't know. Everyone has a million things to do. Sometimes I wish the earth would stop for just one second."

Do you ever feel like Jenna? You go talk to your dad, but he has work to do. Or you call a friend, but she has to study for a test. Jenna's right. People are busy. They each have responsibilities and pressures. So getting people to listen to you takes skills.

We are not talking about typical conversation here. These are tips for getting people to listen to you when it is important. The same techniques are useful in different situations: at work, at school, at home or with your friends.

Talking Tips

Watch your timing:

Make sure it's not a bad time for the people you want to have listen to you. If they're distracted, they won't be good listeners. If you aren't sure, check it out: "I know you really are busy, but I need to talk to you. If now isn't a good time, when would be?"

Get their full attention:

Ask for it if you have to. Do it nicely, but be assertive: "Dan, I really need your full attention."

Prepare ahead of time:

- What is the best way to start?
- What will you say? Practice the words yourself
- What will you do if it doesn't work out the way you want?

Be assertive:

- Assertive means standing up for yourself, and stating your case. It doesn't mean being aggressive.

Use "I messages":

"I messages" are statements that begin with your own opinions or feelings. These messages are particularly important when you are unhappy or upset with someone. Starting with "you" sounds like blaming, and puts the other person on the defensive. Someone who feels defensive is not going to be a good listener.

Keep you cool:

It may be difficult if you don't get what you want, but if you lose your temper and lash out, what are the chances of getting a hearing next time? On the job, it could get you fired.

Communication Worksheet – Practicing the “I” Message Formula



“I...”

Example:

“I feel ... (upset, disappointed, unfairly treated, misunderstood.....)

...when you..... (what the other person does that bothers you)

...because.... (give your reason)

....and what I want you to do is..... (how you want the other person to act)

Working with a partner, complete the following “I” statements.

1. **“If I were you, I wouldn’t work at that job.”**

I feel _____

when you _____

because _____

2. **“You are always asking me to clean my room, but it is clean enough for me. Why can’t you stop asking me to do things I don’t want to do?”**

I feel _____

when you _____

because _____

3. **“You have to get it together if you want to make it to college.”**

I feel _____

when you _____

because _____

4. **“You always want me to pick up the slack for everyone at work. I wish I could just do my job and be left alone.”**

I feel _____

when you _____

because _____

5. "You are too busy to spend any time with your friends. Even when you have some free time, you are too tired."

I feel _____
when you _____
because _____

6. "Why do you always jump into things without thinking about what could happen? I will not always be there to fix everything for you."

I feel _____
when you _____
because _____

7. "You're the best. I wish I could have more friends like you to count on."

I feel _____
when you _____
because _____

8. "You are driving me crazy by constantly asking me for help without trying to do things for yourself."

I feel _____
when you _____
because _____

9. "You always want to go to the mall and I am tired of doing the same thing over and over again."

I feel _____
when you _____
because _____

Practising Good Communication Skills - Assignment

Name: _____

Step 1: Describe a situation where you were happy or sad or angry.

Step 2: Explain how you communicated these emotions to the other people involved. Be sure to include body language, tones of voice, etc.

Step 3: Knowing what you know about effective communication, if you could relive this moment, how would you effectively communicate your message? Use the following list of effective communication skills to help you, write that you would say.

Good Communication Skills

Start all of your statements with the word "I."

Tell what happened and how you feel.

Try not to use the word "you."

Tell the other person how your concern involves him/her.

Tell what you would like to have happen.
