***Active Listening***

**Active** or **Reflective Listening** is the single most useful and important listening skill. In active listening we are also genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting or what the message means, and we are active in checking out our understanding before we respond with our own new message. We restate or paraphrase our understanding of their message and reflect it back to the sender for verification. This verification or feedback process is what distinguishes active listening and makes it effective.

**Active listening** involves verbal feedback. One type of feedback involves **questioning**. You ask for additional information to clarify the speaker’s message. For instance, you might ask, "What do you mean?" By asking this type of question, you want the speaker to elaborate on information already given.

Another type of feedback is **paraphrasing** (e.g., "Let me make sure I’m with you so far," or "What I hear you saying is…"). Then you rephrase the speaker’s ideas in your own words. With this type of feedback, you demonstrate that you have understood the speaker’s concerns.

**Tips for Effective Active Listening:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Stop talking
* Empathize with the other person
* Ask questions
* Be patient
* Concentrate
* Show the other person that you want to listen
* Put the talker at ease
* Be aware of your emotions and prejudices
* Control your anger
* Get rid of distractions
* Get the main points
* React to ideas, not to the person
* Don’t argue mentally
* Listen for what is NOT said
* Listen to HOW something is said
* Don’t antagonize the speaker
* Avoid classifying the speaker prematurely
* Avoid jumping to conclusions

***Effective listening is a skill that comes from practice and a desire to understand the other person.*** |  |

Adapted from: Dr. Nadig’s Guidelines on Effective Communication & Successful Living: http://www.drnadig.com/default.htm

***Feedback***

Feedback should assist in the listener’s comprehension and understanding of the speaker’s meaning. Usually it is important to paraphrase and use your own words in verbalizing your understanding of the message.

* Depending on the purpose of the interaction and your understanding of what is relevant, you could reflect back the other person’s:
1. **Account of the facts.**
2. **Thoughts and beliefs.**
3. **Feelings and emotions.**
4. **Wants, needs or motivation.**
5. **Hopes and expectations.**
* Don’t respond to just the meaning of the words, look for the feelings or intent beyond the words. The dictionary or surface meaning of the words or code used by the sender is not the message.
* If you are confused and know you do not understand, either tell the person you don’t understand and ask him/her to say it another way, or use your best guess. If you are incorrect, the person will realize it and will likely attempt to correct your misunderstanding.
* If you are confused and know you do not understand, either tell the person you don’t understand and ask him/her to say it another way, or use your best guess. If you are incorrect, the person will realize it and will likely attempt to correct your misunderstanding.

Feedback gives you information about your own behavior, its impact on others, and whether it is consistent with your intentions, as well as clarifies the speaker’s message for the listener.

To give **effective feedback,** the information must be:

* Specific
* Non-judgmental ~ Be accepting and respectful of the speaker, their feelings and beliefs without invalidating or giving up your own position.
* Timely
* Direct
* Asked for
* Motivated by a desire to clarify

**Nonverbal feedback** is communicating through facial expressions, physical gestures, or body language your reaction to what is taking place or being said.

***Become a more effective listener. Practice the active listening technique and make it one of your communication skills.***

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