

Active Listening



Communicate more effectively and support others to do the same.

What is active listening?

- Fully concentrating on what someone is saying.
- Reinforcing listening through verbal and non-verbal techniques.
- Making the speaker feel both heard and understood.
- Listening for intent and meaning.
- Listening for what is being said and what isn't.

Benefits of active listening

- Modeling active listening can help others listen more actively and skillfully.
- It contributes to people participating more fully.
- It bridges different perspectives and experiences.
- It helps open and maintain clear communication.

Active listening techniques

- **Mirroring (or restating):** repeating a speaker's words back to them to confirm they've been heard.
- **Reflecting:** mirroring (see above) while clarifying the speaker's intent and feelings to validate that the listeners have understood them correctly.
- **Paraphrasing:** restating, in your own words, the speaker's ideas and feelings to verify whether you understood them correctly.
- **Linking (or bridging, referring back):** highlighting similarities between what different participants have said helps people follow along and connect ideas.
- **Observing and attending to non-verbal communication:** keeping an eye on the energy and tone of individuals and the group overall.
- **Redirecting:** inviting others to respond to a question or comment. It highlights that the wisdom is with the participants (and not facilitator), and reinforces that the group owns the process and outcome. Redirecting encourages group reflection.
- **Summarizing:** highlighting a few key words or points helps the group to clarify or validate the key topics and build on what was said, and helps participants get additional clarity that they have been heard and understood. It also creates a space to check assumptions or correct misunderstandings.
- **Synthesizing:** pulling together and highlighting threads of a discussion helps people connect and people can connect and express the conversation's key points, and then share perspective on why they're important.

Final bullets:

- Active listening skills help focus on the meaning and intent of what someone is saying. Practising them means first checking our mindset and then using various techniques to listen deeply, and confirming to the speaker that you have really heard them.
- Modeling this behaviour helps others in a group to hear the speaker more fully and build their capacity to do the same.

