



Active Listening

Active listening is a skill that can help open up communication and resolve conflict. It entails tuning out your own point of view for a while and really focusing on what the other person is saying. Often when we are trying to discuss an issue that has us feeling emotionally charged, we're not really listening to each other. We may be responding defensively, justifying our behaviour, giving advice etc, and often thinking about our next response before the other person has even finished speaking. When we don't feel heard, our distress often escalates and we can get louder and/or retreat. We're then often left feeling even more upset and frustrated, with the issue remaining unresolved.

Active listening slows down the process of communication and helps us to better understand each others' feelings, rather than making assumptions and jumping to conclusions. When we feel heard we become less defensive and more open and willing to hear what the other person has to say. We are then in a better position to address the issue at hand and come up with solutions that both parties are happy with.

Helpful hints regarding active listening:

Ask questions – enquire about their needs, concerns, feelings etc.

“How do you feel about.....”

Check back – to be sure you have heard and understood correctly.

“I just want to check I’ve understood you correctly. Are you saying.....”

Summarise – “So what you’re saying is.....”

Don’t talk about yourself.

Don’t change topics.

Don’t advise, diagnose, criticise.

Don’t think ahead about you will say next.

Don’t pretend to you have understood if you haven’t.