

ACTIVE LISTENING 101

Active listening is a communication technique that requires the listener to feed back what is heard to the speaker by re-stating or paraphrasing what was heard in the listener's own words. Active listening improves personal relationships, reduces misunderstanding and conflicts, strengthens cooperation, and fosters understanding. The skill is proactive, accountable, and professional.

Active listening is comprised of three primary elements: comprehension, retention, and response.

Comprehension—develop a shared meaning between parties through tone of voice, use of vocabulary and context, and speech pattern.

Retention—take notes if necessary.

Response—respond both verbally and non-verbally

ACTIVE LISTENING TACTICS

- Listen and hear rather than waiting to speak.
- Watch body language.
- Find common ground.
- Paraphrase the speaker's words back to him or her as a question.
 - *"I see/hear/feel like you are afraid of..."*
- Suspend your own frame of reference and judgments.
- Validate what the speaker is saying and feeling
 - *"You seem to feel angry, is that because...?"*

BARRIERS TO ACTIVE LISTENING

- Distractions
- Trigger words
- Vocabulary
- Limited attention span
- Emotions
- Noise and visual distraction
- Cultural differences
- Interrupting or influencing