



Effective Communication Skills

Materials:

- Worksheet

Brainstorm: What sorts of skills do you think encompass the idea of an “effective communicator”? Write down all suggestions on the whiteboard.

Discuss: As you can see, there are a number of skills that effective communicators possess. Have you heard the saying, “You have two ears and only one mouth, so you should do twice as much listening as you do talking” ? Today, we’re going to talk about the importance of active listening when building our communication skills. Often, we jump right into a conversation and start giving our opinion on the situation, without actually hearing what the other person has said. This is problematic because in relationships, we need to listen as well as share our ideas, thoughts and feelings with the other person. Listening is one of the main ways we learn about new things and people. Today, we’re going to work on improving our listening skills.

Dive in!

Active listening is listening in a way that helps us to fully understand the message of the speaker. In order to be an active listener, you need to truly pay attention to the speaker and not become distracted by or lose focus. Active listening isn’t always easy, so you really need to be aware of when you are getting distracted so that you can return your attention to the speaker. By keeping your eyes on the speaker and turning your body toward the speaker you’ll be better able to focus on what they’re saying. Being an active listener means that you’re not trying to prepare for what you’re going to say while the other person is talking. If you’re thinking about what you’re going to say, you can’t be actively listening. Active listeners can let the speaker know that they are listening by nodding their head, smiling, or saying, “uh-huh” or “yes.” In order to make sure that you fully understand what the speaker said you can ask questions such as, “What did you mean when you said...” or “Can you explain ____ more?” Another way to make sure you’re understanding the speaker’s message is by repeating part of what they said. For example, you could say, “I heard you say ...” or “So what you’re saying is ...” This gives the speaker a chance to clarify or correct if needed. To be sure that someone has finished speaking, it’s best to pause for a few seconds before you respond. If it helps, you could even count to 3 in your head before responding. This gives the speaker time to add to what they’re saying before you begin. Being an active listener takes practice, but it’s an important skill to



High School

learn so that you can communicate better. When we don't listen carefully to others, we could misunderstand what they're saying or miss out on an important piece of information. We can get to know others better and learn new ideas by actively listening.

Activity: In pairs, provide the following topics. Each person chooses one topic to share with their partner. While the speaker is sharing their topic, the listener is practicing the above skills. After 5 minutes of speaking, the roles switch and the speaker becomes the listener. While the conversations are progressing, circulate around the room providing feedback to the students.

Topics:

- One thing that might surprise you about me is...
- If you could visit anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- What superpower would you choose and why?
- If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?

Remind students to:

- Let the speaker know you're listening
- Check in to make sure you understand
- Ask more questions to get further information
- Think about what the speaker is saying before you speak
- Sum up what you heard

After each person has had a turn to speak, ask partners to share their summaries.

Reflect: What gets in the way of me listening carefully and with intention? How might I benefit if I improve my listening skills?

Extend and Enrich

Try listening to some of these scenarios. Play one at a time and ask students to explain in as much detail as possible each of the vignettes.

https://youtu.be/7_a3RmBzcyQ



High School

For Further Study

Part of the skill of listening is to be able to remember the details of what someone is saying to you. The Mind Palace technique can be very useful. Here are some links to help:

https://youtu.be/Plbz_gKw0XY

<https://youtu.be/9ebJlcZMx3c>

<https://youtu.be/k9kpJtHI8jQ>

Professional Development

How are your listening skills? How is your memory? What might you do to improve your listening and memory skills? How would that help in your personal and professional life?