

How To Really Listen

Have you ever been told that you don't listen? Or that you completely missed the point? Feeling misunderstood or not listened to can be a key factor in many relationship conflicts.

Active listening is a valuable technique for understanding, absorbing and responding to what is being said. Try using the following skills to help you gain a deeper understanding of others' thoughts and feelings.

- ❖ Use encouragers – use short words and signals to show you are listening and engaged (e.g. nodding the head, words like 'yes', 'uh-huh', 'I see')
- ❖ Pay attention! – it may seem obvious, but many of us are distracted when someone else is talking. We get pulled into our phones, television, or whatever task we are trying to complete. When someone is speaking to you, give them your undivided attention. Maintaining eye contact is a great way to show you are listening, and to keep yourself from getting distracted.
- ❖ Use body language – Do you have your chest facing the other person, or are you already giving them your shoulder? Show you are listening and open to the other person's ideas by maintaining an open posture (e.g. arms uncrossed, alert)
- ❖ Paraphrasing – Repeat back the last thought or a few thoughts using your own words. Demonstrate that you know what the other person is trying to tell you, and give them the opportunity to respond
- ❖ Be patient – allow the speaker to complete their thoughts, you'll get a chance to speak. Interrupting others shows them that you are not listening or do not understand what they are trying to say. Defer judgment until after the speaker has finished. Listen more than you talk.