

SUMMARIZING

Purpose: To review progress; to pull important ideas, facts, and feelings together; to establish a basis for further discussion.

Method: Restate the major ideas that have been expressed, including the feelings.

Examples: “You’re tense and exhausted because you’re being kept awake most nights by loud music from next door. When you tried to ask for a couple of days off, your supervisor seemed angry, and that has made you more tense. Is that a fair summary of what you’ve said so far?”

VALIDATING

Purpose: To acknowledge the worthiness of the speaker; to show respect without necessarily agreeing with what the speaker says.

Method: Recognize the value to the speaker of her/his issues and feelings; show appreciation for their efforts and actions.

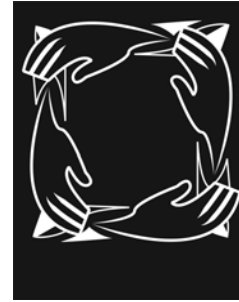
Examples: “I know it has taken a lot of courage for you to speak to me about this.”

“You take a lot of pride in your ability with your computer.”

“The respect of your colleagues is very important to you.”

“Thank you for spending the time we needed to work this out.”

When interacting, people may be distracted, thinking about other things, or thinking about what they are going to say next, and are often not listening attentively to one another. The listener's personal interpretation will also play an important role. These barriers to active listening should be considered.



Active Listening Techniques

Statements that Help the Other Person Talk

(Adapted from Conflict Resolution Services, St. Stephen’s Community House, 169 Brunswick Avenue, Toronto)

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The ability to listen is an important skill in interpersonal communication, improving personal relationships by reducing conflict, strengthening cooperation, and fostering understanding.

Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding to others by focusing attention on the speaker. Suspending your own frame of reference and suspending judgment are important in order to fully attend to the speaker.

Demonstrate active listening though:

ENCOURAGING PHRASES

Purpose: To show interest; to encourage the speaker to keep talking.

Method: Don't agree or disagree; use neutral words; vary your tone of voice; use body language. Nod your head; face the speaker.

Examples: "Can you tell me more about it?"

"What happened next?"

"Uh-huh."

CLARIFYING PHRASES

Purpose: To help you understand what the speaker is saying; to get more information.

Method: Ask questions so that the SPEAKER can help YOU understand.

Examples: "When did this happen?"

"Can you help me picture the situation? Describe where your bedroom is in relation to the kitchen."

"Can you give me a specific example of what your friend said To make you feel insulted?"

RESTATING, PARAPHRASING

Purpose: To show you are listening and understanding what is being said; to check your interpretation of what you have heard to make sure you do understand correctly.

Method: Using your own words, state briefly what the other person has said.

Examples: "So, as you see it, I was being unfair when I gave you that assignment?"

"You think the organization refused you a promotion because you are an immigrant. Is that right?"

"If I understand you correctly, you want your roommate to take a greater share in doing the housework."

REFLECTIVE PHRASING

Purpose: To show that you understand how the speaker FEELS; to help the speaker evaluate her/his own feelings after hearing them expressed by someone else.

Method: Identify the speaker's emotion.

Examples: "This situation has made you very angry."

"You felt humiliated when you were criticized in front of your peers."

"You were devastated when your pet was killed because she was your best friend."