

Active listening is the ability to focus completely on what is being said, as well as being able to understand what is not being said. It is the ability to understand the meaning of what is being said as a reflection of the speaker's needs and desires, while reinforcing the speaker's confidence and self-expression.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTIVE, ENGAGED LISTENERS

Active listeners . . .

- are curious.
- are fully present.
- create a safe space.
- exhibit rapport and demonstrate that they're tracking the conversation.
- clarify conversations and call forth new possibilities.

HELPFUL LISTENING BEHAVIORS

- **Reflect:** Share observations based on the speaker's comments; highlighting specific points that were shared.
- **Paraphrase:** Repeat back what the speaker said, using slightly different words to clarify meaning and intentions.
- **Truth telling:** Point out gaps in the speaker's assumptions and conclusions, or inaccurate statements.
- **Affirm body language;** Nod heads and configure body to exhibiting active, engagement.

UNHELPFUL LISTENING BEHAVIORS

- **Pretending to listen.** This is more obvious than you might expect. You might think you're getting away with faking interest, but people can tell when you are not engaged.
- **Sending mixed body language messages (whether wrong or right).** Pay attention for your body language; in particular, your facial expressions. Try to retain a neutral listening yet affirming posture. Note what your eyes are focused on, and the number of times you sigh or use nonverbal cues. When coaching by phone, pay attention to how our body language may be transmitted through the tone, pace, volume of your voice.
- **Hijacking the speaker's message.** Avoid flipping the speaker's words to make a point they didn't intend, or to share information that is important to us but not the coachee.
- **Disengaging from the listening process to formulate a response.** Avoid seeking to make a point, defend an assumption, or share a catchy phrase or funny story that causes you to no longer be present.
- **Looking at your phone or watch.** Dispel the notion that you can successfully multi-task and still remain fully present. If you need to keep track of time, place a clock directly behind the speaker so that you can still provide eye while checking the time.

REFLECTIONS: WHAT YOU WILL **KEEP** DOING, **STOP** DOING OR **START** DOING TO BE A BETTER LISTENER?

KEEP	STOP	START

