

Active Listening

Effective listening occurs when there is a high degree of correspondence between the sender's original message and the listener's recreation of that message.

There are three categories to focus on when improving your active listening skills.

1. STAYING FOCUSED

2. ABSORBING THE MESSAGE

3. ENCOURAGING THE SPEAKER

Let's reflect on **staying focused**. Rate your behavior compared to the statements below:

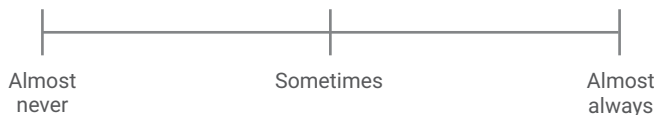
I consciously clear my mind of personal worries and concerns before entering a conversation.



When I disagree with what the other person is saying, I will argue with them in my mind.



I mentally tune out when the subject matter is difficult or takes extra effort to understand.



I fall behind in conversations because I dwell on an earlier point made by the other person.



I remain focused on what the other person is saying even when I am not that interested.



I wait for the other person to stop talking before I formulate my response.



When I catch myself getting distracted, I redirect my attention back to the conversation.



The other person's mannerisms or appearance distract me from what they are saying.



Let's reflect on **absorbing the message**. Rate your behavior compared to the statements below:

I am open to hearing the rest of another person's message even after they present ideas with which I disagree

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

I listen for the overall theme behind the other person's message.

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

I decide what I think about the other person's ideas while they are talking

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

I offer a summary of the other person's main ideas to show that I understand them.

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

I anticipate what the other person's main point is before they are finished talking.

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

I watch for nonverbal cues that contradict the other person's verbal message.

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

I avoid asking the other person to repeat or clarify a point that I don't fully understand.

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

I ask questions that help me find out what the other person may have left out.

Almost never Sometimes Almost always

What patterns are you noticing, if any? What goals do you have to improve your active listening?

Active Listening (CONTINUED)

Let's reflect on **encouraging the speaker**. Rate your behavior compared to the statements below:

I try not to fidget during conversations.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

If the other person loses their train of thought, I offer assistance by restating the point.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

I nod my head or agree verbally even when I'm not completely paying attention.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

I use nonverbal signals to let the other person know I'm paying attention.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

I tend to finish sentences for the other person.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

I use pauses in the conversation to ask questions or change the subject.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

I maintain eye contact with any person who is speaking to me.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

If the other person fails to discuss a point they mentioned earlier, I remind them.

Almost never | Sometimes | Almost always

What patterns are you noticing, if any? What goals do you have to improve your active listening?

Active Listening (CONTINUED)

Here are some concrete behaviors to set you up for success when practicing active listening.

- Stay present
- Remove distractions
- Find a comfortable environment
- Maintain emotional self-awareness
- Ask clarification questions
- Listen for what is NOT said
- Summarize the message
- Provide verbal support and affirmations
- Try not to interrupt
- Avoid detours
- Ask for opinions

Which behaviors do you need to practice the most?

Which people in your life do you view as excellent listeners? Why?

What situations would benefit from improved active listening?