

## Active Listening Techniques

### What is “Active Listening”?

The term *Active Listening* was coined by Carl Rogers, Ph.D. in 1951. Active Listening is a technique of listening that is both active and collaborative. Both the listener and the speaker are working during the process.

### How can I Actively Listen?

*To listen actively, you must follow these three steps:*

**Paraphrase.** When someone says something important to you, you should state in your own words what you think the person just said. If you consistently practice this skill, you will most likely prevent listening blocks and correct false assumptions and misinterpretations. The person you are listening to will feel heard and acknowledged. Paraphrasing can help keep angry feelings from escalating and help you remember what was said. Try: “*What I heard you say is...*”

**Clarify.** Tell the speaker what you thought you heard, and if you were wrong, start asking clarifying questions. Asking clarifying questions tells the other person that you really care about what they are talking about and helps you feel engaged in the conversation.

**Give Feedback.** Try “feeding back” to the person your reactions to what they have just said. Good feedback is immediate, honest, and supportive. Relate, without judgment, your own thoughts, feelings, opinions, or desires relevant to the topic of discussion. Feedback accomplishes three things: a) it is another chance to check out your perceptions of what was said, b) provides the other person with information about the accuracy and effects of his or her communication, and c) the other person gets the benefit of your fresh point of view.

### Active Listening and the Importance of Conversation

Practicing Active Listening techniques with your partner will help you develop a true conversation with your partner. The following are helpful suggestions to ensure for a successful exchange of information:

**Take Turns.** The goal is to achieve a balance between both parties involved, which is often a give and- take process.

**Connecting.** Your comments should be connected to the other person’s remarks in order to be engaging.

**Mutual Influence.** Each person should be open to being influenced by what the other person says. Strive to be flexible and open to new learning.

**Body Language.** Nonverbal behavior is just as important as verbal behavior when communicating to others. Nonverbal behavior includes making eye contact, keeping an open posture, using soft body movements, making gestures, using facial expressions, changing the pitch, volume, or intensity of your voice, and choosing an appropriate distance between you and the speaker.

Use **SOLER**:

- S:** Face the person *Squarely*
- O:** Adopt an *Open* posture
- L:** Remember that it is possible at times to *Lean* toward the other
- E:** Maintain good *Eye Contact*
- R:** Try to be relatively *Relaxed* in your body