



Communication Series #1

Active Listening

The most common communication problem is not listening. To listen effectively, we have to do more than just hear what is being said. We must be engaged and practice active listening. Active listening is all about building rapport, understanding, and trust.

Four Rules of Active Listening

1



Seek to understand before you seek to be understood

Restate: Paraphrase what you think the person has said.

Summarize: Bring together the facts and pieces of the problem to check understanding.

2



Be non-judgmental

Set aside your judgment and withhold blame and criticism in order to fully understand someone. You don't have to like them or agree with their ideas, values, or opinions.

3



Give your undivided attention to the speaker

Focus fully on the speaker. If you are distracted, you may not notice body language, tone of voice, and other nonverbal cues that may tell you what the speaker is feeling. Show your interest in what is being said. Use brief, positive prompts to keep the conversation going and show you are listening (such as "yes" or "oh?").

4



Use silence effectively

Silence is a very valuable tool, especially when used to gather information. You can learn a lot by just being silent and listening. Allow for comfortable silences to slow down the conversation. Give a person time to think as well as talk. Deliberately pause at key points for emphasis. This will tell the person you are saying something that is very important to them.