

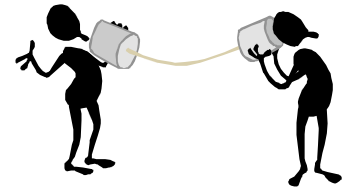
How to ...listen actively



If you speak and no one listens to you properly, it can be upsetting and frustrating. Listening actively means paying attention to other people so that they feel you understand what they are saying.

How can you show that you are listening actively?

- Stop doing other things so that you can concentrate.
- Turn towards the person, so that you can see each other comfortably.
- Use eye contact and 'open' body language, such as leaning forward.
- Be quiet - if you don't interrupt, it will encourage the other person to speak.
- Nod your head and accept what they say. Use expressions like 'I see', 'Yes' and 'Mmmm'.
- Check your understanding from time to time. Say, 'So you mean...?'
- Ask 'open' questions, which will help the person express themselves.



The district manager was due to visit soon. Janet's supervisor had been fussing around all morning. She'd held a meeting only the day before, telling them all to be on their best behaviour. Honestly, thought Janet, what a fuss about nothing.

Eleven o' clock was approaching and that meant time for a cigarette.

'I'm just popping out,' Janet said over her shoulder.

'There isn't time now, Janet. Can you wait till a bit later, please?'

'Don't worry, I won't be a minute,' said Janet as she disappeared out of the door.

The supervisor was left standing with a surprised look on her face. Hadn't she just told Janet not to go now? The district manager had arrived in the car park and the first thing he was going to see was Janet puffing away on the front step of the company building. She felt very angry indeed.

Try this!

Read the case study on the left, and answer the following questions.

- 1 Why did Janet go out when the supervisor told her not to?
 - a) She wanted a cigarette.
 - b) She had not listened properly and did not realise that she was being told not to go out.
 - c) She thought the supervisor was making a fuss.
- 2 Why was the supervisor so angry?
 - a) Janet did not look at her when she spoke.
 - b) The district manager had arrived.
 - c) Janet treated her instruction as unimportant.



Avoid the following in active listening:

- giving a quick reassurance, such as ' Don't worry - it'll be fine.' This may make the other person feel that what they are saying seems trivial to you
- asking 'Why?', as this might make the person feel defensive or that you don't believe them
- telling the other person what they should do
- asking for information that the person may not wish to give
- making judgements.

Try this!

Read the following extract and then complete the sentences below with the most suitable word or phrase.

Anne Warfield, author of *Communicating More Effectively*, says this about listening.

- Listening is the art of truly hearing what a person is trying to say, not just what's said. The best listeners hear the words and see the body language so they capture the whole message.
- If you learn to use active listening skills to hear and comprehend the thoughts, feelings and concerns behind the words, you'll make a speaker feel respected and also create an understanding that leads to progress and mutual benefit.
- Active listening takes concentration, effort and the ability to put your own agenda aside, for the moment, so you can understand the other person's viewpoint.

<http://12.42.224.225/healthyliving/mindbody/jan03mindbodylisteningskills.htm>

1 Listening is:

- a) hearing what's being said
- b) paying attention to the person's body language
- c) hearing the whole message a person wants to give
- d) an important part of communication.

2 It's important to make the speaker feel:

- a) relaxed
- b) respected
- c) mutual benefit.

3 It's important to:

- a) concentrate on the speaker
- b) make an effort
- c) listen carefully and try to understand the other person's point of view.

