

Reflective Listening



A skill for opening the door of communication.

Research has shown that children who learn empathy are less likely to be a bully. Listening is a way that let's the other person know we really "hear" what they are saying, and we are trying to understand what they are feeling.

Reflective listening:

- Encourages children to feel heard and to continue talking.
- Helps children who are "upset" and have lost perspective to think through their problem.
- Requires concentration and patience on our part. (It's OK to say, "I'm on the telephone right now, but I can see this is important and I will give you my full attention in five minutes.")
- Be non-judgmental.
- It is not repeating the person's words, but rather focuses on their feelings.

How to use Reflective Listening:

1. Choose an open-ended phrase (see examples below).
2. Link the open-ended phrase with what you think the person might be feeling.
3. Add the reason you believe to be causing the person's feeling. (It's not necessary to be accurate!)

Example: *Looks like...*

you're feeling hurt (feeling)

because your favorite toy is broken. (reason)

Some Open-Ended Phrases:

It sounds like...

I see that...

It sounds as if...

I hear you saying...

I notice that...

You sound...

You seem to be saying...

It must be...

It appears...

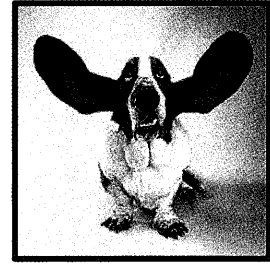
What you're telling me...

Nature gave us two ears, but only one tongue, which is a gentle reminder that we should listen more than we talk!

The importance of listening skills

Building better relationships through active listening.

By Holly Tiret, Michigan State University Extension



Most times when we are communicating with someone we are actively forming, in our own minds, what we are going to say next, after the other person stops talking. This takes our attention off the other person and we tend to miss what they are saying. Listening involves more than just hearing, it also involves responding to what someone is saying. This process is called active listening.

Michigan State University Extension suggests that active listening can help you talk with others more clearly and with understanding. It isn't always easy, but when you can learn to practice it often, it can help you build a better relationship with a partner, a child, a friend or a co-worker.

Strategies for active listening include the following:

- **Focus your full attention on the other person talking.** Face them and maintain eye contact, and be sure you are at the same level. If they are standing – you should stand, if they are sitting – you should sit.
- **Ask good questions.** Don't accuse or blame in your questioning. Try to look for hidden meaning. Ask open-ended questions and make sure your tone of voice is sincere. For example, "What do you think we should do about the situation? What do you feel are the options?"
- **Keep yourself from judging what the other person is saying.** Try not to assume that you know what they mean or what they are thinking.
- **Sometimes it helps to repeat back to the other person what they just said, but in your own words.** That way you are checking to see if you have heard them correctly. This can provide more information and the other person has a chance to correct any misunderstandings. It also shows that you are interested in what they are saying.
- **Put yourself in their shoes.** Accept their feelings, thoughts and ideas about the situation, whether or not you agree or share the same perspective. This does not mean you 'give in' to the other person. It does, however, let them know that you acknowledge what they are saying, feeling or thinking.

Active listening takes time and practice. However, every time you use active listening, it gets a little easier. It can help you to navigate through difficult conversations. More than that, it helps improve overall communication, builds a better understanding and ultimately leads to better relationships with family, friends and co-workers.

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