

## Building Friendships: Listening Skills

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Become aware of the importance of good listening skills.
2. Describe the key elements of active listening.
3. Practice active listening techniques.

### HANDOUTS:

1. *Study Guide for Active Listening*
2. *Take Home Message for This Session*

### ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

- Handout materials for participant workbooks
- Scrapbooking materials
- Flipchart and markers
- Pencils and pens



### GETTING STARTED

Review Homework Assignment (If the **Positive Stroke** or **Discounting** lesson is chosen before this, please review homework assignment as the icebreaker.)

*Good listening skills are important to develop a positive relationship with your child's other parent. Just like learning to ride a bike takes time and practice, so do good listening skills.*

*In this lesson, you will learn the importance of good listening skills. We discuss the importance of active listening. Active listening means listening to other people without pre-judging them.*

### ACTIVITY: Learning to Listen

*The first step in communicating with your child's other parent is to listen. Most times when we are talking with someone else, we are often thinking about what we are going to say and not listening to what the other person is saying. We don't hear what other people are saying. Unfortunately, if we don't hear what other people are telling us, we won't be able to understand and hear their points of view. In order to understand a topic from another person's perspective, you need to be a good listener.*

*Let's begin with an activity about how you view things. First put your name on a card. Then, get into small groups and arrange your chairs in a circle. Place the card with your name on it on your lap.*

[List some controversial topics on a flipchart—such as gun control, nighttime curfews for neighborhoods, legal age to buy tobacco, etc. Have each group pick a different topic. After five to ten minutes, have each group share their views. ]

1. What did your group choose to discuss?
2. Did you have different points of view in your group?

*Now, exchange your name card with someone in your group with a different point of view. Continue your discussion from the other's point of view.*

*What did you think of this activity? Here are a few questions to consider:*

- What were some of the challenges in speaking from someone else's point of view?
- Why do you think these challenges occur?
- How did you feel during the exercise?
- Can you be as passionate (believe as strongly) about another person's point of view?

### ACTIVITY: Mini-Lecture on Active Listening

Prepare a powerpoint presentation or flipcharts with the following information. Have participants complete the **Study Guide for Active Listening**.

*Listening involves more than hearing what the other person is saying. It also involves responding to what they are saying. This process is called active listening and it is a vital part of working with your child's other parent in parenting.*

*Active listening is a communication tool that can help you speak with each other clearly and with understanding. It is not easy but a very worthwhile skill to learn.*

The first step in active listening is focusing your attention on the other person when they are speaking. Then it involves using these strategies to actively listen to the other person:

### 1. Ask good questions.

- Don't accuse or blame in your questioning.
- Look for the hidden meaning. Seek information.
- Ask open-ended questions and make sure your tone is sincere.
- Good examples: What do you think we should do about this situation? What do you feel are the options? What happened before the fight took place?

### 2. Keep yourself from judging what the other person is saying.

- Don't assume that you know what the other person means or is thinking.
- Don't give advice to the other person.

### 3. Repeat back to the other person what they just said but in your own words.

- Called "paraphrasing"—checks with the other person if you have heard them correctly.
- Usually leads to obtaining more information.
- Lets the other correct any misunderstandings and promotes interest.

### 4. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and accept his or her feelings, thoughts, and ideas about the situation.

- Does not mean you agree with the other person.
- Does not mean you have to give into the other person.
- Means that you are not "discounting" what the other person is saying.
- Takes a great deal of work on the listener's part.

Some additional things to remember about active listening:

- It takes time and practice and does not work overnight.
- Every time you use active listening, it will get easier and helps you to include more active listening.
- You can lead the way with the other person.

### ACTIVITY: Active Listening Exercise

This next activity demonstrates the importance of careful listening. Pick a partner, perhaps someone you haven't worked with in class before, and decide who will be the speaker (the person doing the talking) and who will be the listener (the person receiving the message).

First, the speakers tell their partners a story about something that happened to them. When the speakers finish telling their story, the listeners must repeat the story back to the speakers. The speakers will then tell the listeners if the story was accurate or not and tell the listeners the correct information in the story.

In good communication, the listener gives feedback about what was said and then the speaker responds to the listener about the accuracy. Now, let's have the speakers and listeners switch roles and repeat the activity.

[When everyone has completed the exercise, use the flipchart to list their comments during a general discussion about listening and reasons for inaccuracies.]



### Discussion questions:

- How did you feel when you were the listener?
- Did you find yourself listening closely because you knew you were going to have to repeat what was said?
- Did you sometimes make mistakes?
- Why do you think that the “receiver” doesn’t always repeat everything accurately?
- Do you sometimes have a different idea about what something means?

### ACTIVITY: Scrapbooking Page on Active Listening

Have participants prepare a scrapbook page that shows the importance of active listening and the positive ways it effects one’s relationships.

### HOMEWORK:

Have participants take a minute to complete the “Take-Home Message” for their magnet. The action step should focus on practicing active listening with someone they know.

### CLOSING:

Today, we learned how to communicate by listening to other people actively. Active listening means to focus our attention on the other person and to hear the meaning in what they are saying. In order to do so, we ask questions, repeat the information we heard and put ourselves in the other person’s shoes. Active listening is an important step toward building a positive relationship with our child’s other parent.



# Study Guide For Active Listening

What is active listening?

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What is the first step in active listening?

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What are the four steps in active listening?

**1.** .....

- Don't accuse or blame.
- Look for the hidden meaning.
- Ask open-ended questions and make sure your tone is sincere.
- Good examples: What do you think we should do about this situation? What do you feel are the options? What happened before the fight took place?

**2.** .....

- Don't assume that you know what the other person means or is thinking.
- Don't give advice to the other person

# Study Guide For Active Listening

3.....

- Called “paraphrasing”—checks with the other person if you have heard them correctly.
- Usually leads to obtaining more information.
- Lets the other person correct any misunderstandings and promotes interest.

4.....

- Does not mean you agree with the other person.
- Does not mean you have to give into the other person.
- Means that you are not “discounting” what the other person is saying.
- Takes a great deal of work on the listener’s part.

What are some other things we need to remember about active listening?

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# Take Home Message for This Session

**Directions:** Think of one step you will take before the next session and write it down in the space provided. In addition, write down the time, date, and location of the next session.

**To actively listen, ask good questions and tell the other one what you heard.**

My Action Steps:

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The Next Session:

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DATE

.....  
TIME

.....  
LOCATION

