

The Counseling Process

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Listening

Mindful Listening Group Practice

In many ways, active listening is a mindfulness practice. The listener is trying to stay focused on the present, with what is being shared. And they are working to accomplish this without judgment.

Here is an excellent activity to practice mindful listening in a group.

1. Have the group sit in a circle.
2. Offer an ice breaker question or prompt, such as something they are grateful for today.
3. Rather than go around the circle, ask participants to share spontaneously when they feel ready.
4. Invite them to notice if they are thinking about their answer, rather than listening.
5. Ask them to be present with the person who is sharing.
6. Challenge them to notice if they are uncomfortable with the silences.

Mindful listening alone

At any moment, you can drop in and practice mindful listening. Simply stop what you are doing, close your eyes, and try to see how many sounds you can hear around you and within you. Notice if there are judgments arising and try not to attach to them. Stay with the flow of sounds for as long as you can.

Practice Active Listening

This worksheet offers a five-step process to improve your communication skills with another person. It would be a useful tool for working with couples or anyone who would like to hone their listening skills.

The five steps are:

1. Step in their shoes.
2. Fact-check your interpretation.
3. Give your full attention.
4. Clarify what they've said.
5. Clarify what you've said.

Listening Accurately Worksheet

#1: Step In Their Shoes

Select someone that you would like to work on your relationship with. When you talk, try your best to take their point of view. For instance, try picturing that you are them, going about their day. Does your capacity to feel empathy change by taking their perspective?



#2: Fact-Check Your Interpretations

Reflect on the dialogues you and that person have had. Make a conscious effort to fact-check your interpretations and assumptions regarding what they said.



#3: Give Your Full Attention

During a conversation, start by giving your full attention to the other person. Before you move on to other things, consider what might occur if you asked: "I would like to clarify that I've understood you correctly. May I?" Almost every time, you'll get a positive response.



#4: Clarify What They've Said

Make an effort to clarify what you think you have heard - identify and reflect their emotions. If you are unsure whether you've understood correctly, just ask.



#5: Clarify What You've Said

During conversations, you might try asking the speaker if they could share what they've heard from you. How would you clear up any misunderstandings if they arose?



7 Techniques to Train Your Active Listening Skills

Technique	Purpose	To achieve it	Examples
Paraphrasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey interest • Encourage the speaker to keep talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate the information just received with your own words. 	<p>“So, you showed up at the meeting on time.”</p>
Verbalizing emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that you understand • Help the speaker to evaluate their own feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect the speaker’s basic feelings and emotions in words. 	<p>“And this made you really angry.”</p>
Asking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get more information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions. 	<p>“And after that, John did not react?”</p>
Summarizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progress • Pull together important ideas • Establish a basis for further discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate major ideas expressed, including feelings. 	<p>“These seem to be the key ideas you’ve expressed:”</p>
Clarifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify what is said • Help the speaker see other points of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions for vague statements. • Restate wrong interpretations to force further explanation. 	<p>“You said that you reacted immediately. Was this still on the same day?”</p>
Encouraging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey interest • Encourage the speaker to keep talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree. • Use varying intonations. • Offer ideas and suggestions. 	<p>“Then your manager approached you. How did they behave?”</p>
Balancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get more information • Help the speaker evaluate their own feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions. 	<p>“Did you perceive the inconvenience to be worse than not being taken seriously?”</p>

