

# Be an Active Listener

Creating an environment that welcomes open and honest dialogue requires active listening. Active listening is an attempt to demonstrate unconditional acceptance and unbiased reflection when listening to others so they know you are working to understand their message.

When we are intentional about building trust and establishing rapport, our relationships, both professional and personal, are improved. To hone your active listening skills, keep the following in mind:

Common Mistakes	Tips for Active Listening
Daydreaming or thinking about something else while the other person is speaking.	Practice nonverbal involvement by making eye contact with the speaker or nodding at times, demonstrating that you are present in the moment and not distracted by anything else.
Thinking of what to say next, or interrupting the speaker with advice or feedback.	Practice paraphrasing by repeating what you believe the other speaker has expressed to you in your own words or by asking questions so they know you are following and understanding the conversation.
Listening with a specific goal or outcome in mind, and judging what the speaker is saying.	There is no need to evaluate what the speaker is saying. Resist the urge to agree or disagree with the speaker. Absorb their words and body language and practice empathy.
Filling in moments of silence.	Silence can be a powerful tool for reflection during conversation. If you find tolerating silence difficult, consider asking open-ended questions that can help you understand or learn more.

## More Tips for Effective Communication



**Get the facts.** No one ever knows all the facts. Be willing to listen and consider other viewpoints.



**Put emotions aside.** Don't let anger or jealousy stand in the way of attentive listening.



**Think before you speak.** Do not react hastily to what someone says if you disagree. You may regret what you say.



**Maintain consistent eye contact.** Nodding occasionally also conveys the message that you are still with them.



**Avoid talking too much.** Think about what you need to say, and then choose the simplest way to say



**Match your tone and message.** It is tempting to break up a serious discussion with laughter. Don't use humor to avoid a meaningful, serious topic.

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