

# ACTIVE LISTENING

Involves the listener carefully understand, remember and thoughtfully respond to what they have heard.



# 5 key techniques you can use to develop your active listening skills:

1. **Pay attention**
2. **Show that you're listening**
3. **Provide feedback**
4. **Stay out of judgment**
5. **Respond appropriately**

# 1. Pay attention

- Give the speaker your **undivided attention**, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.
- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts.
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors. For example, side conversations.
- "Listen" to the speaker's body language.

## 2. Show that you're listening

- Use your own **body language and gestures** to show that you are engaged.
- Nod occasionally.
- **Smile** and use other facial expressions.
- Make sure that your **posture** is open and interested.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with **small verbal comments** like yes, and "uh huh."

### 3. Provide feedback

- Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect on what is being said and to ask questions.
- Reflect on what has been said by **paraphrasing**. "What I'm hearing is... ," and "Sounds like you are saying... ," are great ways to reflect back.
- Ask **questions to clarify** certain points. "What do you mean when you say... ." "Is this what you mean?"
- **Summarize** the speaker's comments periodically.

## 4. Stay out of judgment

- Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.
- **Allow the speaker to finish** each point before asking questions.
- **Don't interrupt** with counter arguments.

## 5. Respond appropriately

- **Active listening is designed to encourage respect and understanding.** You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting her down.
- Be open and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully.
- **Treat the other person in a way that you think they would want to be treated.**

