Active Listening Skills

The way to improve your listening skills is to practice "active listening." Active Listening is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, take active steps to ensure you fully understand the message being communicated.

According to the Center for Creative Leadership, “Active listening is a valuable technique that requires the listener to thoroughly absorb, understand, respond, and retain what is being said.”

Effective Speaking and Listening Tools

Active listening tools encourage the speaker and listener to restate in your words the feeling and content that is being expressed to ensure understanding and ongoing progress in building a clear conversation.

- **Restating** – To show you are listening, repeat every so often what you think the person said — not by parroting, but by paraphrasing what you heard in your own words.
- **Reflecting** - Instead of just repeating, reflect the speaker's words in terms of feelings
- **Summarizing** – The listener pulls together the main ideas and feeling of the speaker to show understanding. Useful when there is a large amount of information being conveyed
- **Minimal encouragers** - Use brief, positive prompts to keep the conversation going and show you are listening
- **Giving feedback** - Let the person know what your initial thoughts are on the situation. Share pertinent information, observations, insights, and experiences. Then listen carefully to confirm
- **Probing** - Ask questions to draw the person out and get deeper and more meaningful information
- **Validation** - Acknowledge the individual's problems, issues, and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy, and respond in an interested way
- **Effective pause** - Deliberately pause at key points for emphasis. This will tell the person you are saying something that is very important to them