

Communication Skills

Friends and Family: Active Listening

Choose an adult in your home to be your partner in this activity. Read the information about Active Listening with your partner and follow the instructions below.

Please write your partner's name here:

Active Listening

Most people know what it means to listen to someone else. But it can be easy to get distracted or not to pay attention when someone is talking. Active listening is a way of listening that shows you are paying attention to the person and to the conversation. This is an important skill that you will use in your life, whether you are talking to someone in your family or to your supervisor at work. Some of the important skills of active listening are:

1. **Eye Contact:** When you talk to someone one-on-one you should maintain eye contact. If you are looking away or at your phone during the conversation the other person will think you are not paying attention. You don't need to stare at the other person, but you should make an effort to keep eye contact during the conversation.
2. **Encouraging Words:** Using little words like "oh?" "Then what?" or nodding and making a sound like "umm-hmm" helps to show you are paying attention and encouraging the other person to continue.
3. **Asking Questions:** If you don't understand something someone said, ask them to explain. You can also ask questions about what the person just said, like, "Really? They did (what the person just described)?" or "Wow, What did you think when that happened?" or "It sounds like you were really nervous!"

Practice these skills by taking turns having short conversations (2-3 minutes) with your partner. You can talk about something you did recently, something that interests you, or any other topic you can talk about for a few minutes. After each conversation, talk about whether the person talking felt the person listening was interested and paying attention. After you have both taken at least two turns, answer the following questions together:

1. When you were speaking, did the other person seem relaxed and comfortable when they were listening? When you were listening, did these skills feel comfortable to you?
2. Working with your partner, can you think of three situations where good listening skills would be important?
3. Could you and your partner think of some ways to practice these skills in your life? Where or when?