Effective Listening for Understanding, Trust, and Collaboration

Special Education Mediation Services

Michigan Alliance for Families
information, support, and education

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SPECIAL EDUCATION MEDIATION SERVICES

Effective Listening for Understanding, Trust, and Collaboration

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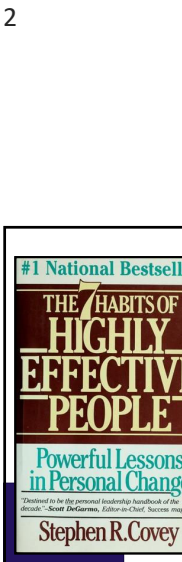

Why are we here?

"Communication is the most important skill in life. We spend most of our waking hours communicating." But consider this: You've spent years learning how to read and write, years learning how to speak. But what about listening? What training or education have you had that enables you to listen so that you really, deeply understand another human being from that individual's own frame of reference?"

~ Stephen Covey

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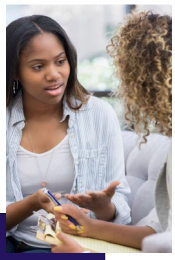

Importance of Listening

- Builds trust and safety
- Uncovers deeper insights
- Reduces conflict and misalignment

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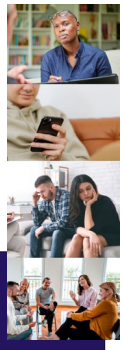

Today's Agenda

- What effective listening is
- Barriers to listening
- Strategies to improve listening
- Practice and application

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Active listening is about making a **conscious effort** to hear and understand someone else.
~ Carnegie Mellon University

The ability to **focus completely** on a speaker, understand what they're saying, respond and reflect on what's being said, and retain the information for later.
~ Center for Creative Leadership

Definition

A communication technique which requires that the listener **feed back** what the other person has said and **reflect** that hearing the complete message that was expressed...
~ Education Week

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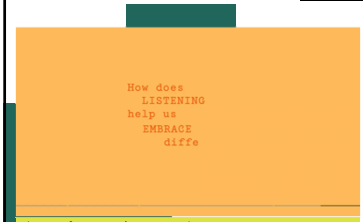
Role in Communication

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpnNsSyDw-g



The Art of Listening | Simon Sinek

- Acquiring information
- Encourages people to share
- Clarification
- Appreciation for different perspectives and experiences
- Improve understanding
- Builds trust

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Types of Listening

Empathetic
The art of making someone feel truly seen, heard, and understood without judgment or immediate problem-solving.

Appreciative
A way in which someone actively goes in search of certain auditory information that you appreciate or like.

Critical
The process of actively analyzing, evaluating, and judging the validity of a message rather than just accepting it at face value.

Comprehensive
The process of listening to understand the full message of the speaker rather than focusing on individual words or sentences.

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Empathetic Listening

be present
attentive
listen to tone
body language
feelings

"You sound angry and upset."

"Thank you for sharing that with me."

"I don't really know what to say right now but I'm so glad you told me."

"It sounds like this has been very stressful."

"Wow, you look like you're really excited about this."

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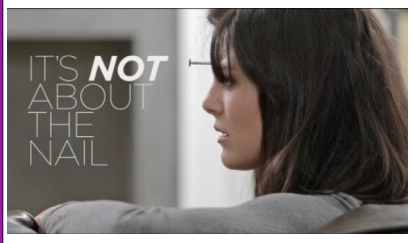
Empathetic Listening Skills

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg&t=5s



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Avoiding Interruptions



The WAIT Technique helps to avoid Interruptions

W.A.I.T.

Why
Am
I
Talking?

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Appreciative Listening



P = present > undivided attention, no judgement

L = look and learn > eye contact, no interruption

A = accept > tell me more, yes and

Y = yield > speaker will feel heard and valued

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Critical Listening

- Is this backed by solid data?
- How does it align with the objectives?
- Is this an opinion or a fact?

Don't use in emotionally charged conversations or during creative brainstorming sessions.

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Comprehensive Listening aka Deep Listening

1. Create space
2. Listen to yourself first
3. Be present
4. Be curious

Deep listening: Transform your relationships with family, friends, and foes.
~Emily Kasriel

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Comprehensive Listening aka Deep Listening Cont.

5. Hold the gaze
6. Hold the silence
7. Reflect back
8. Go deeper

Deep listening: Transform your relationships with family, friends, and foes.
~Emily Kasriel

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Barriers to Effective Listening

- Physical Barriers
- Psychological Barriers
- Semantic Barriers
- Technological Barriers

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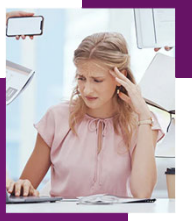
Physical



Physical barriers are environmental factors that make communication more difficult by interfering with a person's ability to hear, see, concentrate, or engage effectively.

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Psychological



Psychological barriers are internal obstacles within the receiver or sender that interfere with effective communication, even when the message is clearly received.

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Semantic



Semantic noise is a barrier that occurs when there is no shared meaning among words, symbols, or phrases.

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Technological



Technological barriers in communication are obstacles caused by problems in technology systems, devices, or digital infrastructure that disrupt, delay, or distort the exchange of information between sender and receiver.

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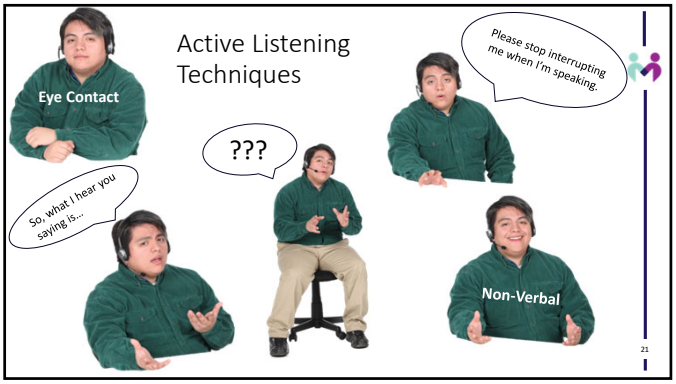
Active Listening Techniques



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Please Pass the Butter

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_dAkDsBQyk



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Maintaining Eye Contact



Eye contact communicates:

- I'm here.
- I'm paying attention.
- What you're saying matters.

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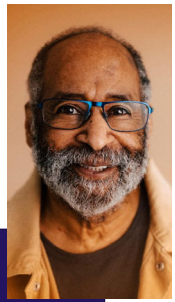
Non-Verbal Communication



Pay attention to:

- Show Interest, Concern, Surprise, Encouragement
- Tone of voice
- Body language
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Silence

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Nonverbal Communication Skills

Snack Attack

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38y_1EWIE9I



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Paraphrasing for Understanding

So what I'm hearing is…

OR

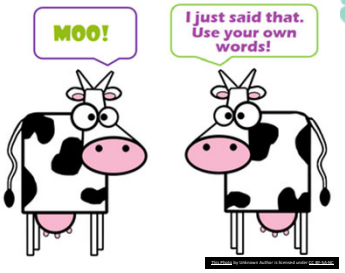
Let me make sure I understand…

Then:

You're saying…

End with:

Did I get that right?



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Asking Clarifying Questions



The **OARS** Model is borrowed from Motivational Interviewing and is easy to remember:

O - Open ended questions

A – Affirmations

R – Reflections

S - Summaries

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Active Listening Checklist

Presence is one of the greatest gifts you can give to another person.

- Maintain comfortable eye contact
- Use encouraging facial expressions
- Don't interrupt
- Ask one clarifying question
- Paraphrase before responding
- Notice body language
- Stay fully present

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Benefits of Effective Listening

Strengthened Relationships

Better Conflict Resolution

Enhanced Learning and Productivity

Increased Empathy and Inclusion

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What We Do



We support students who receive special education supports and services (IFSP/IEP) birth to age 26 by fostering cooperation and effective teamwork among those who plan their education. The overall goal is to provide communication tools for students, parents and educators making decisions that improve education outcomes.

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How We Do It



Free • Effective • Fast

Mediation
A FREE neutral mediator leads families and schools through a process to resolve conflict and come to a mutual agreement on a plan to benefit the student and improve outcomes.

Facilitation
We help families and schools navigate complex meetings, stay on task, and make sure all points of view are heard by providing a FREE neutral meeting facilitator.

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What's the Advantage?



- A facilitator or mediator is viewed as a neutral and can sometimes motivate participants to be on their best behavior.
- A facilitator or mediator can help focus and guide the conversation in a positive direction.
- A mediator can talk privately (caucus) with participants to de-escalate their frustrations and convince them to explore options.
- A mediator can help write up any agreed solutions and can come back in the future whenever needed.

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How To Request FREE Service

(Did we mention they're **free**?)

Call
1-833-KIDS-1ST
Mikids1st.org

Participate in Intake Process

We contact parties, arrange schedules and process paperwork.

Parties Meet

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In Conclusion

In your conversations today, make listening your priority. Bring your full awareness, not just to the words, but to how they're being shared.

Notice the speaker's expressions, the rhythm of their voice, the gestures they use. Tune into what's beneath the surface: the pauses, the shifts in tone, the feelings that rise and fall between the lines.

You can still share your thoughts and build on what others are saying but give space for them to fully express themselves. Offer subtle cues, like eye contact, a nod, or a gentle reflection, to show that you're fully with them.

When you listen with intention, you honor the person speaking.

by rabble
for growth

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Contact SEMS

Services

1-833-Kids1st
(833-543-7178)

Program Information

2111 University Park Dr., Ste.550,
Okemos MI 48864
Phone: 517.334.0034
Fax: 517.220.4181
Email: info@MiKids1st.org

Website

Mikids1st.org

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Thank You

Bern Dempsey, Mediator Development/Training Specialist
Sue Feenstra, Program Administrator
Taryn Francis, Outreach Representative
Beth Kohler, Outreach Coordinator
Rebecca Kozlow, Outreach Representative
Diane Kullis, Intake Specialist
Anwyn Murphy-Scheffler, Creative Consultant
Laura Zangara, Intake Coordinator/Program Supervisor

MICHIGAN Department of Education
Michigan Department of Education
Office of Special Education

Special Education Mediation Services
Working Together for Student Achievement in Michigan

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We are here to support you!



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/MichiganAlliance

For more information visit
www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org

Call 800-552-4821
En Español 313-217-1060
248-963-0607 للغه العربيه
info@michiganallianceforfamilies.org

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Michigan Alliance for Families

In collaboration with The Arc Michigan

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