**Active Listening Seminar – Skills to Grow With**

**Welcome:** We hope you are greatly benefitted by this study of active listening. Feel free to use this material in any form that benefits you and your work. We are glad to assist you.

**Why this seminar today?**

To improve your ability to obtain and understand information on all plains.

To improve your ministry/work performance and relationships.

To increase the life and health of your family relationships.

**What we will do in this material?** Study, practice and resource.

Study: we will examine aspects of what it means to be an active listener. These terms describe someone who is choosing to care for another person and relationship with that person. Active listening could be simply described as choosing to connect with other people with skill and intention.

Practice: we will spend half of our time together practicing what we are learning. (note: it is obvious to say that you will benefit far more from this material by using in a group setting.)

Resource: we will examine some of the great variety of resources available on this topic.

**What is our Goal?** Our goal is to improve. Every step we take that enables us to more clearly understand and relate to the people we work with and care for is a big victory. Imagine your world: what if all the relationships you share were suddenly blessed with crystal clear communication and connection.

**Section 1. Why Listening is So Important!**

It can shape and form the very image of other human beings.

It communicates value, love, respect, affection…or the lack thereof.

It elevates and forms relationships… or lowers and destroys them.

It supports life, business, intellectual and emotional growth… or …

It can literally be a key tool in healing the brain and soul of those you love.

**Exercise 1. Attending**

The ABCs of active listening. A: Eye contact B: Posture C: Gesture

S.O.L.E.R. Five steps to attentive listening

Squarely face the person

Open your posture

Lean towards the sender

Eye contact maintained

Relax while paying attention

**Section 2. The Content of Communication!**

The spoken words…tone, inflection, nuance and heart words.

The context of the discussion…work, play, family and intimate setting.

Body language…what is being communication by face, hands or torso?

The emotional/spiritual content…fear, joy, love, apathy or distraction.

The intellectual assumption…are you and the speaker on the same page?

We want to become students of people and communication.

**Exercise 2. Paraphrasing**

What is it? Paraphrasing is restating a message, but usually with fewer words. Where possible try and get more to the point.

Purpose:

1. To test your understanding of what you heard.

2. To communicate that you are trying to understand what is being said. If you’re successful, paraphrasing indicates that you are following the speaker’s verbal explorations and that you’re beginning to understand the basic message.

When listening consider asking yourself:

* What is the speaker’s basic intellectual/thinking message?
* What is the person’s basic emotional/feeling message?
* What is the person’s spiritual message? What is God doing?

Example:

S: I just don’t understand, one minute she tells me to do this, and the next minute to do that.

X: She really confuses you?

S: I really think he is a very nice guy. He’s so thoughtful, sensitive, and kind. He calls me a lot. He’s fun to go out with.

X: You like him very much, then?

**Section 3. Understanding the Difficulties of Listening!**

Be aware of these landmines as you navigate the fields of communication.

Two or more people are involved; each has desires, needs and intentions in a conversation. The content of the conversation is often lost in subordinate agendas.

The content of the conversation is often unclear and in flux.

Transference… What is it? Def. The unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another. Your feelings influence what you hear.

People are complex and emotions can be powerful. Emotions can overcome all other forms of communication.

People have spiritual influence, whether it is known or not.

A word about brain chemistry…are you overwhelmed? You must restore relational circuits in the brain or walk away.

**Exercise 3: Clarifying**

What is it: The process of bringing vague material into sharper focus.

Purpose:

• To untangle any unclear or wrong listener interpretation.

• To get more information.

• To help the speaker see other points of view.

• To identify what was said.

Example:

Restating: I’m confused; let me try to state what I think you were trying to say….

You’ve said so much; let me see if I’ve got it all….

Asking clarifying questions: Be specific, be aware of emotion, and avoid criticism and judgment. How many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are you proposing? What were your main points?

**Section 4. Putting Your Focus on The Speaker!**

Listening is never a passive skill. You must choose to what degree you will invest in this conversation.

Start with the choice to focus on the speaker! How much do you have to give. Be honest!

Consider the value of the person and their point of view.

Self-check your own thought process. Who or what are you thinking about?

Employ skills to gain understanding.

**Exercise 4: Summarizing**

What is it: pulling together, organizing, and integrating the major aspects of your dialogue. Pay attention to various themes and emotional overtones. Point out key ideas and feelings into broad statements. DO NOT add new ideas.

Purpose:

• To give a sense of movement and accomplishment in the exchange.

• To establish a basis for further discussion.

• To pull together major ideas, facts, and feelings.

Example:

A number of good points have been made about rules for the classroom. Let’s take a few minutes to go over them and write them on the board.

We’re going all over the map this morning. If I understand you correctly,

The three major points of the story are…

**Section 5. The Flow of Active Listening**

First: Focus on the speaker.

Deal with distractions.

Set your mind, body and heart to listen.

Second: Work on grasping the content of the message.

Watch for emotional content.

Watch for non-verbal content.

Seek to understand the speaker’s point of view.

Try to grasp the main point or points of the speaker’s message.

Third: Affirm the speaker with gestures or comments as you understand.

Use verbal affirmation and supportive comments.

Use non-verbal gestures and stances.

Fourth: Request clarification as needed.

Use summary statements or clarifying statements to confirm your connection.

Use reflection to assure speaker of content received.

Use reflection to connect emotionally and affirm the speaker.

**Exercise 5: Primary Empathy**

What is it: Reflection of content and feelings.

Purpose:

1. To show that you’re understanding the speaker’s experience

2. To allow the speaker to evaluate his/her feelings after hearing them expressed by someone else.

Basic Formula:

You feel (state feeling) because (state content)

Example:

Student: I just don’t know how I am going to get all this math homework done before tonight’s game especially since I don’t get most of this stuff you taught us today.

Teacher: You are feeling frustrated and stuck…You are feeling frustrated and stuck with math you don’t know how to do and you’re worried that you won’t figure it out before you go to the game. Am I hearing you correctly?

**Conclusion:** Each time we successfully communicate with another person we grow and gain. The joys of doing business successfully and seeing the lives that we live thrive can be enabled and enhanced as we practice these simple skills. Good listening to you all.

Resource review:

The Lost Art of Listening; Michael P. Nichols, PHD; Gullford Press, 2009

Just Listen; Mark Goulston; Amacom Management Association, 2010

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People; Stephen R. Covey; Simon and Schuster, 1989

The Five Love Language; Gary Chapman; Northfield Publishing, 1995

Web suggestions; [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com): Google search “active listening.”