



Leading from the ground up

For new or renewing leaders



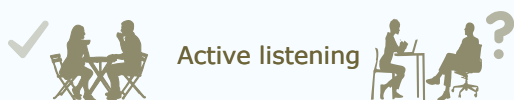
Communication - Helping others

While we are responsible for our own role in communication, we can act in ways that make it easier for others to communicate with us. In this infographic we briefly identify a few of these ways.

Engaging others

If we want effective communication, we need to engage with others. We have to be active in areas such as building rapport, an attentive posture, keeping what we say relevant, showing them respect, managing our tone of voice and volume, adapting to the styles of different personality types from the reserved to the confronting, and acknowledging others' identity and adapting to others' culture, not just assuming they will do things my way.

Here are a few key factors that generally apply to any communication situation.



Active listening

The number one way to help others communicate is to pay attention. Don't multitask. Focus. To facilitate the flow of communication, maintain eye contact (but don't stare - blink!). Acknowledge what they say with small sounds like "mmm" and "ah" as you go along. When they finish or pause, don't start your response but acknowledge what is said, such as "I hear you saying..." or "It seems really important to you that..." and the like. Your attentiveness will help the communication flow and strengthen your connection with the other person.



Empathy

Empathy is accurately recognising how others feel. There are always feelings. Sometimes they are low key, so don't have much impact on the communication. At other times, they are heightened and are important. There is no point trying to communicate if you ignore heightened feelings. They have to be acknowledged and addressed.



Culture and diversity

Culture and diversity are more than an indication of where we are born and our identities. Our backgrounds and sense of self create our sense of normal and influence our decisions, preferences, and actions. How they are expressed is affected by the way those around us treat us. When communicating, never assume anyone, however similar they seem, has the same approach as you. As you wish to be respected, respect their differences as well.

Facilitating interaction

"I" rather than "You" statements

Be careful with "You" statements, especially during sensitive conversations. There is a big difference between, "You let me down." And, "When you did xyz, I felt let down." The first is an accusation. The second is a statement of the consequences. In the second the speaker made an "I" statement. "I" statements are not about making it about you. Rather, they are about owning your part in the conversation without assuming or alleging things about the other.

Avoid absolutes

Statements like "You always..." or "They never..." invite people to find exceptions rather than understand what you are saying, especially if there's a disagreement. There are few things in life where we can know things in absolute terms, including things we could be criticising. Reverting to "I" statements can help: "I seem to see this a lot..."



Clarify rather than interrogate

Asking lots of questions takes over the conversation and makes it about you and what you are thinking. Sometimes you may need to do this but remember, it can leave the other person feeling interrogated. It can even feel disempowering since your questions are driving the conversation. If you want to know more, seek clarification, such as, "I heard you say xyz but I'm not sure what that meant." Or, "Could you say more about xyz?"

Feelings trump everything

Intense feelings heavily influence how our brain functions. For example, as feelings grow, stress can narrow our focus, elation can let us overlook things, fear and anger can lead us to defensive or aggressive approaches. Intense feelings show us that the content of the conversation is really important to the people involved. This needs to be acknowledged and time allowed for those feelings to be attended to. This recognition can sometimes be used for the parties to commit to a positive way forward for the conversation.

