



ACTIVE LISTENING

“If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear.” - Mark Twain

What it means:

Active Listening is simply a specific way of helping a conversation to be productive and to stay on track.

Why it's needed:

People often feel attacked or personally insulted when a friend, colleague, or partner gives advice or feedback. This also happens when a couple is trying to discuss a topic that needs a resolution or a decision that needs to be made.

Unfortunately, many of us feel that we are being criticized and we become defensive, and then the discussion devolves into a full-blown argument.

Tone of Voice:

One of the most frequent complaints is that one person is offended by the other person's tone of voice. Tone of voice is subjective and often, the perceived offender does not think they were annoyed or disrespectful. However innocent our tone of voice, it ends up being unproductive to dwell upon something so subjective. I urge people to talk calmly and to have these conversations when you are both as relaxed as possible. And try to talk conversationally. You are not trying to convince the other to change their mind. The goal for each of you is simply to understand the other person's thinking, and perhaps their feelings, as well.

If each person uses the following guidelines, one person at a time explaining their point of view until fully understood by the other, it can greatly help in understanding the other person's view and usually eliminates the defensive feelings many of us are prone to have in these situations.

The Goal:

The goal is to understand what the other person is saying, while deferring judgment. When you've both said your piece, it will become increasingly clear exactly where the differences between you are. Hopefully, you will also understand the reasons behind the other person's thinking. This can help when there are going to be compromises, because how strongly one of you feels about something will matter; especially if the other person realizes that it's just not that important to them.

5 MAIN COMPONENTS:

1. PAY ATTENTION

Make eye contact, nod your head

2. SHOW THAT YOU'RE LISTENING

Facial expressions, therapeutic grunts (hmm. Ohh)

3. PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Request clarification

(are you saying that you...? Don't assume you understand what the person is saying to you...show this by asking for clarification)

4. DEFER JUDGMENT

Paraphrase what you think the person is saying or meaning

(you're not thinking about what you think about what the person is telling you, you're fully absorbed in listening, and not assessing)

5. RESPOND APPROPRIATELY

Ask open-ended questions

Ask specific probing questions