

## Active listening

### Purpose

To provide a framework to help me listen actively.

### Opportunities for use

In any situation.  
With all people and at all times.

### Benefits

- ✓ Demonstrates that I value the contribution of others.
- ✓ Encourages greater contribution from others.
- ✓ Saves time and makes it easier to reach agreement by reducing cross talk.
- ✓ Helps me to concentrate and therefore to understand what is really being said to me.

### Outline of this tool

#### The Ten Commandments of Active Listening

- **Stop talking**
- Recognise that listening is hard. Prepare myself to listen: look at the talker
- Avoid distractions
- Be interested
- Keep an open mind
- Check, and keep checking, on my understanding
- Look for non-verbal communication
- Put myself in their position if possible
- Don't argue - it stops me listening
- **Stop talking**

### How to use this tool

This tool can be used by anyone. A good starting place is to:-

1. Listen generously.
2. Listen as though my life depends upon it.
3. Listen in order to report back accurately, rather than to agree or disagree.

Try the following:-

- "So what you are saying is?"
- "Is this what you mean..."
- "That's interesting, go on"
- "Building on from your last point..."
- "So you are feeling ....."

and

- Look at the person – good eye contact.
- Nodding my head to indicate agreement, expressions, e.g. smiling.
- Create comfortable circumstances for important discussions, e.g. seating

and especially

- Be willing to listen.
- Believe that the person has something useful to tell me.
- See it from the other person's point of view. Get into their shoes.

### Some experiences

Active listening is as much about using my eyes as it is about using my ears.

Find situations where I can practise without people feeling that something odd is happening.

Use it and notice the difference it makes.

### References

Bolton, R. (1986). *People Skills*. Touchstone.