



ACTIVE LISTENING

LISTENING TECHNIQUES FOR EVERYONE

“

listening
is
simple

”

Anonymous young person, Access to Industry

What is Listening?



Day to day conversation
and communication

Young people listening to
staff and each other, as well as showing
respect in group activities

Observation - assessing a
situation so it can be dealt with proactively

Listening to someone when
they need support

Monitoring and evaluating - collecting
qualitative and quantitative data

Defining Listening

“By ‘listening’ we are referring to an active process where young people are given tangible opportunities to have a say in, and shape, services, or to influence wider policies and practices. There are two related but distinct types of listening that partners’ projects focused on:”*

“Internally-focused listening: a process where an organisation takes account of young people’s views, opinions and experiences with the aim of developing their offer, in terms of the activities and services they deliver and how they are delivered.”*

“Advocacy-focused listening: a process where an organisation provides young people with opportunities to influence external organisations, agencies or institutions, such as local authorities or national bodies, on the basis of their views and experiences.”*

*Listening Fund (Scotland): Final Learning Report 2021

Why Listen?

All children and young people have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously. Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says children have the right to be listened to.

Spaces to
connect with
each other

Building trusting
relationships
with trusted
adults

Opportunities to
give feedback and
be involved in
decision making
processes

Listening to children and young people is important to ensure that services designed to support them are meeting their needs. It is important for organisations including funders to understand what really matters to children and young people.

Children's Rights



Everyone has human rights. It does not matter where somebody comes from, their age or beliefs.

The UNCRC is a list of human rights specific to children and young people. Those in power, including organisations, funders and policymakers, are responsible for ensuring the rights of children and young people are protected.

This includes ensuring the rights of children and young people are championed when planning and delivering services. There are 45 articles in the UNCRC that list all the rights that are important for children and young people to live a healthy and happy life. Some examples include:

Article 12 – I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously

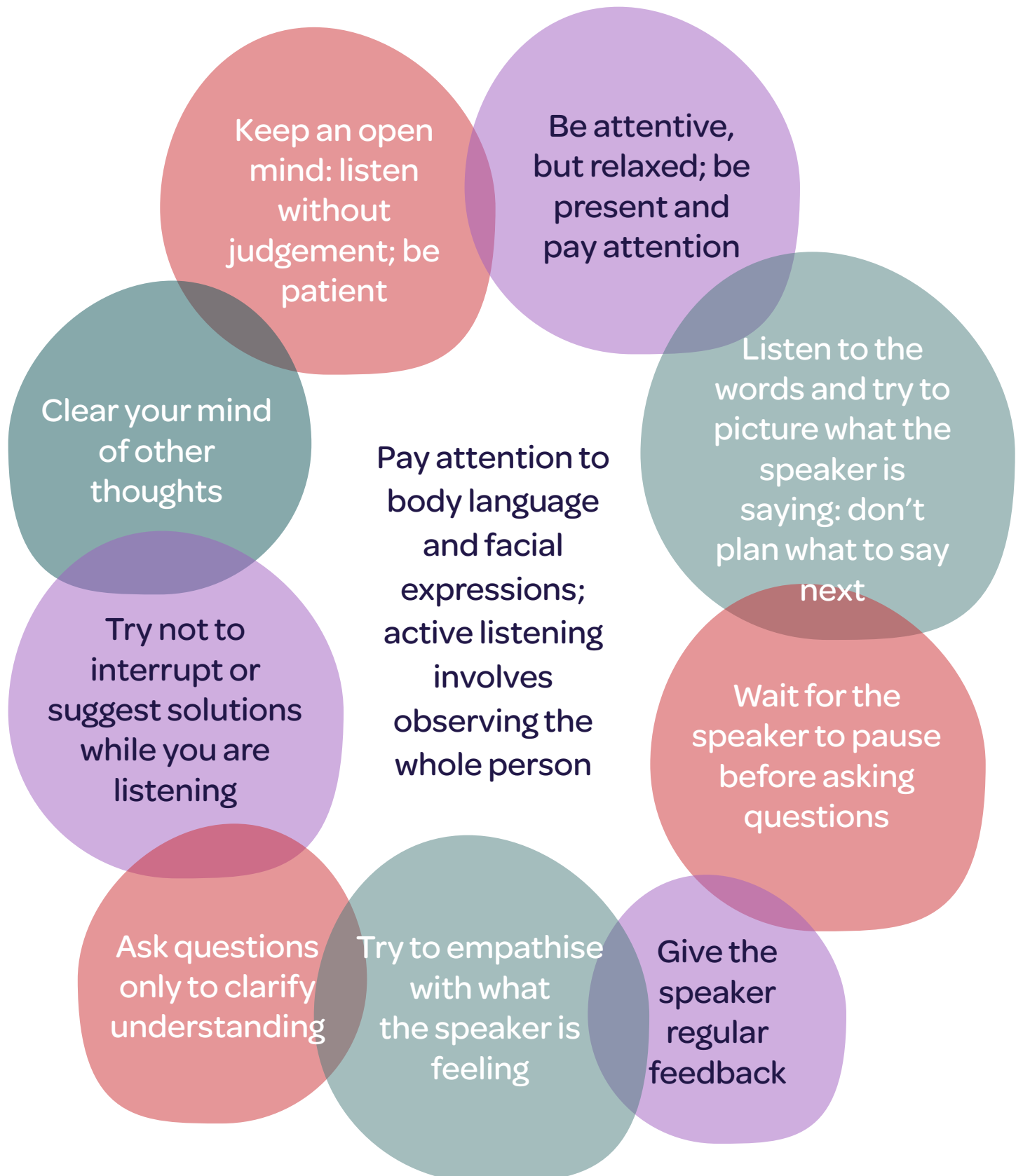
Article 15 – I have the right to meet friends and join groups

Article 29 - I have the right to an education which develops my personality, respect for others and the environment

Article 31 – I have the right to play and relax

This toolkit provides practical examples and activities to support the realisation of children and young people's rights through listening and participation. You can learn more about how funders incorporated children and young people's rights in the Listening Fund work.

Ten Tips for Active Listening



Active Listening:

THE TECHNIQUE



WHEN TO USE

When a young person approaches you for a chat

When you notice or suspect that someone is struggling

If a colleague seems to have a lot on their mind



1

Start by asking the person what they would like to talk about

2

Allow the person to talk through their problem uninterrupted (this can take 5-10 mins)

3

Listen with undivided attention and if the person pauses, allow them to gather their thoughts and continue

4

Observe verbal and physical cues, all behaviour is communication; then respond accordingly to show that you are listening

IMPORTANT:

If you learn anything that may indicate a child protection issue, please take immediate action by referring to the company's child protection policy

Active Listening: RESPONDING



Ask few questions - those that you do ask should be open-ended in order to invite more than a one-word or yes or no answer

Use a variety of brief responses; such as nodding your head, or saying 'uh-huh,' 'I see,' 'go on,' 'what happened next?.' This communicates that you are listening encourages the young person to continue

Rather than offer solutions help the person to identify options for themselves

Active listening will help young people to decide a course of action by themselves. Solutions suggested or imposed by adults are often resisted, short-term or only agreed to by the young people in order to maintain relationships / please the practitioner

Active Listening Conversation Tips

Restating - To show you are listening, repeat what you think the person said every so often – not by parroting, but by paraphrasing in your own words. For example, 'Let's see if I'm clear about this....'

Summarising - Bring together the facts and pieces of the problem to check your understanding. For example, 'So it sounds to me as if' Or, 'Is that it?'

Reflecting - Instead of repeating, reflect on the speaker's words in terms of feelings. For example, 'This seems important to you...'

Giving feedback - Let the person know what your initial thoughts are. Share appropriate information, observations, and experiences. Then listen carefully to confirm.

Emotion labelling - Putting feelings into words will often help a person see things more objectively. For example, 'I'm sensing that you're feeling frustrated....worried....anxious....'

Probing - Ask questions to draw the person out and get deeper and more meaningful information. For example, 'What do you think would happen if you...?'

Validation - Acknowledge the individual's problems, issues and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy, and show you are interested. For example, 'I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue....'.