



help@drpamrussell.com

Dr. Pam Russell, LLC.

752 Blanding Blvd. #131 - Orange Park, FL 32065

904-830-0737 Phone • 904-272-5603 Fax

www.drpamrussell.com

Active Listening For Personal Conversations

Here is a handy sheet you can use as you work toward becoming an active listener.

- **Choose the right place and time.**

Find a time and a place where you're both relaxed. This can be a crucial part of communicating actively and effectively. If you're shouting to each other from different rooms, for instance, you're unlikely to hear what each other is saying accurately. It's also really hard to listen to someone when there's lots of background noise or other things competing for your attention.

- **Use your body language.**

Facing towards someone when they're talking means you're much more likely to focus on what they're saying than if you're facing away or looking at something else. If they're upset, try sitting close to them, putting an arm around them, if appropriate, and most importantly, maintaining eye contact.

- **Listen intelligently.**

Listening intelligently means looking out for the meaning behind the speakers to hear not just what they're saying, but what they're trying to say. Asking open-ended. It is a great way to open up the conversation further, as it will give the speaker the chance to explain things in their own words, rather than having words put in their mouth.

- **Try first to understand, and then be understood.**

It can be easy to focus more on what you want to say than on trying to understand the speaker's point of view. But the risk with this is you simply end up waiting for your turn to talk, rather than actually listening. Before you talk, commit to putting your views and agenda aside.

- **Avoid judgement.**

Communication flourishes when there's trust, but flounders when there's judgement or criticism. Being able to listen without making judgmental statements or putting each other down is crucial to building and maintaining trust. Butting in or picking holes is only likely to hurt them, not convince them. No matter how much you're tempted to insist you're the one in the right or snap at the speaker because you feel they're being unreasonable, try to listen calmly, rather than give in to your emotions.

- **Show you're listening to what the speaker is saying.**

That doesn't necessarily mean agreeing all the time. However, it makes it clear you've understood, or that you're *trying* to understand. For this, you can employ some specific techniques. These include:

- **Mirroring what the speaker has said.** Repeat it back to them: 'It sounds like you're saying... and that has made you feel...'. That way, you're making it clear you're focused on them, not on yourself.
- **Clarify things.** Make sure you get it right, don't assume. Ask: 'Am I understanding you correctly?'
- **Empathize.** Statements like 'that must make you feel...'; 'I understand why you feel that way, given what happened'; 'I can imagine that would be really hard'. You show the speaker you're not only listening, but putting yourself in their shoes.

Please remember listening is a skill, and it takes time to learn. Some of the tips I have given may not feel that natural at first, and you will have to be persist and practice before they become natural. However, if you stick with it, not only will you find it easier, you will also find you are communicating better as well.