

NON-JUDGEMENTAL LISTENING HANDOUT

Seven Non-Judgemental Listening Techniques

Minimal Encouragements

Sounds made, especially on the phone, to let one person know the other is there and listening. Such as, "Oh?", "When?", and "Really?". They are questions, comments or sounds that do not interfere with the flow of conversation, but do let the subject know that the negotiator is there and listening. They help build rapport and encourage the subject to continue talking.

Paraphrasing

A summary in your own words of what you were told. Demonstrates listening, creates empathy and establishes rapport because it is evident that you have heard and understood. Usually paraphrasing begins with the words, "Are you telling me..." or "Are you saying..." Paraphrasing also clarifies content, highlights issues and promotes give and take between you and the subject. It tends to make the subject a better listener.

Emotion Labelling

This is often the first active listening skill to be used in a crisis communication incident. It is important to be attuned to the emotion behind the words and facts. Commonly, we all want to get into problem-solving too early. Too early an approach to problem-solving is doomed to failure because the subject is often not ready to reason, and you have not listened enough to get all the information you need to assist in problem-solving. Common phrases for you to use are, "You sound...", "You seem...", "I hear..." (emotion heard by you). You do not tell people how they are feeling, but how they sound to you as if they are feeling.

Do not be concerned about making a mistake in labelling emotions. The subject will correct you and will often appear grateful for the attempt. Be aware of missing emotions and listen for conflicts in the feelings expressed, especially if they appear inappropriate to the situation. Emotion labelling is not a technique to apply when you are verbally attacked. In that instance, switch to an "I" message (see below).

Mirroring (or Reflecting)

This is the technique of repeating the last word or phrase and putting a question mark after it. This provides very exact responses because you are using the subject's own words. Reflecting or mirroring asks for more input without guiding the direction of the subject's thoughts and elicits information when you do not have enough to ask a pertinent question. It is useful when you are at a loss for words and it provides an opportunity for the subject to think about what you have said.

Open-Ended Questions

The primary use of open-ended questions is to help a subject start talking. Asking open-ended questions encourages the person to say more without directing the conversation. They are questions that cannot be answered with a single word such as "yes" or "no". Open-ended questions

get information for you with fewer questions, those that usually begin with how, what, when and where. Note that “why” questions are not asked directly. “Why” questions also tend to pass judgement.

Closed-end questions give a feeling of interrogation that makes rapport building difficult. They also cause you to work too hard at thinking up new questions.

“I” Messages

“I” messages enable negotiators to let the subject know how he is making you feel, why you feel that way, and what the subject can do to remedy the situation. This is a non-threatening approach and does not put the subject on the defensive “I” messages are used when communication is difficult because of the intense emotions being directed at you. It is also used when the subject is trying to manipulate you and you want him to stop the attempts. Negotiators also use this technique to refocus the subject and when they are verbally attacked.

Effective Pauses

Silence can be very effective on several levels. Most people are not comfortable with silence and will fill it with talk. It is to your advantage to keep the subject talking. Silence can also be used to emphasise a point. You can use silence just before or just after saying something important.

