

DAILY READING

DAY 4

What To Avoid During Active Listening

Active Listening could be considered simple, as it only requires doing three basic things. Actually, it may be quite difficult at first because of all the things you want to avoid doing.

When we listen to another, we may have impulses to say or do things we've learned from our culture and our childhood. Most of these impulses are not useful when we want to be caring, understanding and helpful. These impulses can be avoided with practice and awareness.

The responses that are best to be avoided when doing Active Listening are shown below. With practice, these impulses can be minimized and you'll find yourself naturally being with others in a more compassionate, loving and effective way.

1. Asking Why - "Why did he beat you?"

Asking WHY something happened or WHY did you do that, is a question looking for a rational answer. This drives the person back into their rational mind to find a logical answer, i.e. it puts them back into their head. We want to move them deeper into their heart, and their feelings. Also, most rational answers are not the true source of a problem.

2. Giving Advice - "I think you need to forgive your wife."

There are times when someone will be asking for your advice, due to your expertise or experience with an issue. This is not to be presumed. Unless specifically requested, Giving Advice is disrespectful and short circuits a person's process. Giving Advice usually will involve your own projections and a judgement the person can't find their own answer inside of them.

3. Sharing Your Story - "I used to hate my wife too, but I ...", "I was just like you, I ..."

When someone shares something that relates to your own past, it is natural to want to share your story with them. This is not helpful when you are working with or simply holding space for someone who needs your attention on THEIR issues and THEIR experience. When you share, it takes the person out of their process so they can respond cordially to your story.

4. Negating / Minimizing - "That's all he did? That doesn't seem so bad."

Many issues are based on experiences that may seem unimportant or even trivial to others. Saying things like: "That's all he did? That doesn't seem so bad." is disrespectful at best, in most cases, it will end the process and any trust they may have had with you.

5. Projecting Your Stuff onto Another – “I’m so stupid”; ”you’ve got a mean critic”

Any judgement, diagnosis, interpretation or advice that comes up for you around what a person says, is most likely based on your own thought processes and experiences. They are therefore projections of what you would do or why you would do something. Projections are usually what our judgements of others are based on. They are usually wrong or, at least, not helpful. Please avoid.

6. Judging Anything or Anybody - “That was a vicious thing to do.”

To share any moral or quality assessment is simply projecting your beliefs, values and limitations on another. Saying things like: "That was a vicious thing to do." are not helpful to human relations of any kind.

7. Rescuing - “I hate my looks.”..... “I think you look great.”

When a person says something that seems overblown or just not true, let it be their truth for them to process. If they say: "I hate my looks" don't Rescue them from their feelings by saying "I think you look great." Let them have the feeling or judgement so they can find the true source of where they took on this negative opinion.

8. Diagnosing - “I feel like hurting somebody.” - “I bet you were an abused child”

When someone describes an issue, it is your responsibility as a friend or facilitator, to listen and perhaps guide them through a process where they can discover what the issue truly is and how they can resolve it. To assume what the issue is or how or why it came about is to cut off hundreds of other possibilities and limit the healing potential of any process.

9. Fixing Their Problem - “Let me talk to your wife.”

People often need to share what is happening to them. They need to hear themselves talk about it. In this way, they often gain insights into an issue and ideas of how to work with it. Offers to fix their problem or how they could fix it themselves are usually received as insulting and only increases their emotional distress.

10. Consoling Someone During Processing – “It’s OK, don’t be sad.”

We want a person who is sharing sad feelings to allow for these feelings to lead them to some insight or resolution. The feelings are often a gateway to their inner world or sub-conscious where the true source of their distress can be revealed. Consoling or gently touching someone in distress takes them away from this healing opportunity.

11. Telling or Teaching Information without Permission

Giving direction or information to someone who is in their feelings takes them out of their heart and puts them back into their head to receive the teachings. It is the task of the listener or facilitator to create a context or process for the person to discover this information for themselves.

HAVE A COPY OF THE FOLLOWING IN FRONT OF YOU FOR THE DAY 4 SESSION

What To Avoid During Active Listening - Summary / Examples

1. WHY? (Puts THEM in their heads)

“Why did he beat you?”

2. ADVICE

“I think you need to forgive your wife.”

3. SHARING

“I used to hate my wife too, but I ...”

“I was just like you, I ... “

4. NEGATING

“That’s all he did? That doesn’t seem so bad.”

5. PROJECTING

“I’m so stupid””You’ve really got a mean critic”.....”Huh?”

6. JUDGING

“That was a vicious thing to do.”

7. RESCUING

“I hate my looks.”..... “I think you look great.”

8. DIAGNOSING

“I feel like hurting somebody.” “I bet you were abused as a child.”

9. FIXING

“Let me talk to your wife.”

10. CONSOLING DURING PROCESSING

OK during regression.

11. TELLING / TEACHING

The goal is to move the person into an altered state and deeper into issue, not to provide information that puts them in their head.

It is the task of the facilitator, not to tell a person what their problems are, but to create a context / process for them to discover them for themselves.

MENTORS SESSION GUIDE

DAY 4

INTENTION

- To discuss what to avoid during Active Listening.

CHECK-IN

Mentor B:

I (Mentor B) will be taking us through the session today.

As usual, we will start with a check-in. Please check-in on how you're feeling right now and remember to use I-statements and the 5 feelings.

Also confirm that you did the reading for today. I'll start.

[B and A check in]

INTRODUCTION

Mentor B:

Today, we will be sharing with each other the challenges for us to use Active Listening. Specifically, we'll share which of the items from the "Avoid list we tend to do regularly.

ACTIVE LISTENING, WHAT TO AVOID

Yesterday you had a chance to practice the 3 key elements of Active Listening while I shared.

You may have noticed how difficult it can be to limit yourself to the three elements that we're using.

Using these three elements may seem simple, it's just 3 things to do.

Unfortunately, it is not easy as it goes against many of the habits that we've developed over our lifetime.

You may have noticed when you were listening to me, how a number of impulses to go outside of these three elements may have come up for you.

LISTENING CHALLENGES

We've listed a number of these in the reading for today. Do you have the list in front of you?

We can now discuss which ones are especially hard for you to avoid. I'll share my challenges as well. Also, please let me know if there are any of these that you don't fully understand.

Also know that you will get plenty of opportunities to practice Active Listening and eventually it may become second nature to you to avoid these pitfalls.

[A & B discuss challenges]

LISTENING EXERCISE

Mentor B:

In the time remaining, we can have a little fun with these items to avoid.

I will share a sensitive issue with you and I want you to respond with lots of the "Avoid" responses. Feel free to exaggerate. We'll go about 5 minutes and then we'll switch roles. Any questions? OK, I'll share now.

[A shares, B responds]

Now we'll switch roles. Please share an issue you have.

[B shares, A responds]

CLOSURE

Mentor B:

How was that for you?

Thank you. Now, let's check out.

CHECK OUT

SCHEDULE THE NEXT SESSION

HOMEWORK

Please complete the Day 5 Reading prior to the next session.

END SESSION