

# Active Listening Tips



Think about the different types of conversations you have experienced where you are speaking and the person is listening and you left the conversation feeling truly seen, heard and understood. The listener was probably engaging in some active listening skills where they were present, and attuned to what you were sharing. Here are 10 tips on how you can also practice active listening with your children and fellow adults.

- Set an intention to be **fully focused and present** during the conversation.
- Be mindful of **non-verbal communication** such as tone of voice, facial expression and body language. Noticing what they are conveying non-verbally could give you more clues as to how they are truly feeling. Paying attention to whether your own non-verbal cues conveys openness & compassion.
- **Practice pausing before responding** so that you slow down your reactions.
- While listening, notice if any internal thoughts, feelings or sensations come up for you and simply “note” them without judgement. Heather Plett, the author of ‘The Art of Holding Space’ describes **holding space** as the double duty of unconditionally supporting other person’s experience while unconditionally supporting your own experience in the process.
- Use **inviting and encouraging language** such as saying “mmm..”, “tell me more...” or “go ahead”.
- Remember that while you may not agree with what they are saying, you can **acknowledge or validate** what they are saying as what they are truly experiencing. Use validating phrases such as “I hear you..”, “I can see how you would feel this way...” or “That must have been hard (insert feeling) for you.”
- **Practice repeating or paraphrasing** what you heard them say, to check in that you have understood them accurately. If you would like to suggest if they are experiencing a feeling, you can use open language such as “I wonder if you are feeling...” or “are there feelings of sadness (or others) coming up for you?”
- **Practice asking for consent** before offering your thoughts, suggestions or opinions. “Would you like to hear what I think about the situation?” “Would you be open to hearing some suggestions that came to my mind?”
- **Be compassionate with yourself and the other person if communication is stuck, awkward or difficult.** We are not able to control how the other person is reacting, and our ability to pause and respond also depends on our current state of emotions and well-being.
- Ease into building up your active listening skills by practicing with people who you feel safe with such as trusted friend, like minded parents or a supportive community.