

How Listening Lowers Anger

Practice Listening Skills

Objectives:

The students will:

- identify and rehearse active listening behaviors.
- practice restating the words of another person.

Materials:

whiteboard; writing implements

Directions:

In this activity, the students work in pairs. One partner speaks about a topic. The other listens and restates what he or she hears. The speaker then has an opportunity to give feedback to the listener regarding the quality and accuracy of the listener's restatement.

Tell the students that a good strategy for resolving conflicts or lowering the level of anger is to listen carefully to the other person. Explain that good listening includes 1) hearing what the other person is saying and 2) showing the other person that you are

really listening. This is called “active listening.” In your own words, explain these benefits of active listening:

By listening carefully to what the other person says, you are able to understand that person's feelings and point of view. By restating what you hear, you not only prove that you are paying attention, you help the other person express feelings and thoughts. You may even help solve a problem. Both speaker and listener gain something when active listening occurs.

Ask the students to help you brainstorm ways in which one person can show another that he or she is really listening. Write all ideas on the board, and discuss how each behavior demonstrates good listening. Elicit responses such as:

- facing the other person
- looking into the other person's eyes
- nodding at appropriate times
- not allowing yourself to interrupt

- waiting for a pause before asking the other person to clarify a point
- restating what the other person says

Have the students choose partners; then give the following directions:

Decide who is the speaker and who is the listener. Speakers, you will have 2 minutes to talk about a topic which I will announce. Listeners, you will demonstrate active listening behaviors. You will also listen carefully and try to remember everything that is said. When I call “Time” after 2 minutes, listeners will have 1 minute to retell everything they remember hearing. Talk directly to the speaker and include any ideas, details, or specific language that you can remember. Finally, speakers will have 1 minute to correct anything that their listener misunderstood, as well as to describe how it felt to be listened to.

After the first round, have the partners switch roles and repeat the entire process using the same or a different topic. Allow 2 minutes for the speaker to address the topic, 1 minute for the listener to restate what he or she hears, and 1 minute for feedback to the listener by the speaker.

Suggested topics:

- My best school memory
- My worst school memory
- A famous person I would like to meet and why
- If I had a million dollars...
- If I were an animal...
- If I ruled the world...

Conclude the activity by discussing how it feels to be heard and understood. Explain that listening carefully to another person and showing that you are listening can be an effective way to resolve conflict and lower feelings of anger, because what the other person may need most is to have his or her feelings and ideas listened to and accepted.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did you feel when your partner showed that he or she was listening carefully to what you were saying?
2. How did you feel when your partner was able to retell so much of what you said?
3. Why do you think it is important to listen carefully to the other person and show that you are listening?
4. How can listening help resolve a conflict?