

## Active Listening

**Active Listening** – an attempt to clarify and understand another’s thoughts and feelings; the process of sending back to the speaker what the listener thinks the speaker means.

**Example:**

Martha: “I really missed cooking and making towels while away from home.”

Kim: “So you were really longing to come back home?”

## Steps in Active Listening

1. **Stop:** Before you can effectively tune in to what someone else may be feeling, you need to stop what you are doing, eliminate as many distractions as possible, and fully focus on the other person.
2. **Look:** Now look for nonverbal clues that will help you identify how the other person is feeling. Emotions can sometimes be better seen through nonverbal cues. Look at the person’s face, listen to their voice, and be mindful of their body language.
3. **Listen:** Listen for what the other person is telling you. The person may not tell you exactly how they feel so you must look for cues. Match the verbal and nonverbal cues to decipher both the content and emotion of the person’s message.
4. **Ask Questions:** You may need to ask questions in order to understand

the other person. Most of these will serve one of four purposes:

- (1) to obtain additional information
- (2) to find out how someone feels
- (3) to ask for clarification of a word or phrase
- (4) to verify your conclusion about your partner's meaning or feeling.

5. **Paraphrase Content:** Paraphrasing is restating in your own words what you think another person is saying. From time to time, quickly summarize the message another person has given so far.

**Example:**

Emily: I think this job is too much for me. I'm not qualified to do it.

Howard: You think you lack the necessary skills.

**Tips for Active Listening:**

1. Paraphrase the speaker's meaning.
2. Express your understanding of the speaker's feelings.
3. Ask questions.

**Purposes of Active Listening:**

1. To show that you are listening.
2. To check how accurately you have understood what the speaker said and meant.
3. To express acceptance of the speaker's feelings.
4. To prompt the speaker to further explore his/her feelings and thoughts.