

Active Listening

Active Listening: This means paying close attention to the words the speaker is using, how the person is saying it, and also other cues to understand what a person is saying. The following are important to active listening:

- ◆ Stop – As a listener, you stop what you are doing and give the speaker your full attention. This shows the speaker that that what she/he has to say is important. For example:
 - While the person is speaking, don't fidget and squirm and start looking at your checklist as if you want to move on to something else.
 - Instead, you make the person feel as if this is the most important thing you could be doing right now and your time is truly hers/his.
 - You seem to assume that the speaker has something worthwhile to say.
- ◆ Look – Eye contact is important. When you make eye contact – looking right at the speaker shows that you respect what she/he is saying. It also lets you see the person's facial expressions and what her/his body is saying (body language). For example:
 - You look the speaker in the eye and give her/him your full attention.
 - You smile at the person and make her/him feel comfortable and valued.
 - Or, you begin shaking your head and saying "no" before the speaker has finished a thought.
- ◆ Listen – As a listener, you need to pay close attention to the words of the provider and the way she/he says them (the sound of her/his voice); is it common to a particular Tribe? You want to try to understand both what the speaker is saying and also her/his feelings. Don't start thinking about your response. For example:
 - You ask questions that show that you are trying to understand.
 - Whether or not you agree, you make that person feel that you respect her/his opinions and feelings.
 - Or you finish the speaker's sentences as though nothing she/he has to say is new or important to you.
- ◆ Respond – This is the last step in the process of active listening. Only after you hear and can understand what she/he means, do you start to think about an effective answer. Think of your response before you speak. The following things are important to keep in mind as you respond:
 - You do this with respect, showing interest in what the person said and that you understand her/his feelings.
 - To show mutual respect and a sense of cooperation, you don't answer impulsively (quickly saying the first thing that comes to mind without thinking through your response).
 - If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and tell the provider you will get back to her/him or refer the provider to the R&R or other resource who can provide the right information.

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