

Active Listening Exercise

Read the description of the principles of Active Listening. Break class into three member groups; assigning member A, member B, & member C.

Step 1. For 3 to 5 minutes, A & B are to have a conversation. A is to choose a topic of personal importance. After A talks, B is to paraphrase what A has said. Then B continues on with the conversation A has started. When B is finished, A must paraphrase what B has said before A continues.

Ground Rule: Before anyone can speak, that person must paraphrase the other person. It is C's responsibility to make certain the two participants who are conversing maintain this ground rule.

Step 2. After A and B converse, then B and C converse. B will initially choose the topic, and A will be the "keeper of the ground rule." After B and C converse, C and A will converse. C will initially choose the topic, and B will be the keeper of the ground rule.

Step 3. After each person has an opportunity to paraphrase, triads will discuss items on active listening. This processing is done in the existing triads; one member of each group records comments made by group members to each question. Some possible discussion items include the following:

1. Did you have difficulty in listening to others during the exercise? Why?
2. Did you find that you had difficulty in formulating your thoughts and listening at the same time? Difficulties might include such things as the following:
 - a. You forgot what you were going to say.
 - b. You were not listening to others.
 - c. You were rehearsing your response.
3. When others paraphrased your remarks, did they do so in a shorter, more concise manner?
4. Did the manner of presentation by others affect your listening ability?
5. How did you feel when your partner accurately paraphrased you?
6. What usefulness does the learning you have gained from this exercise have in your everyday experiences?
7. How did you feel when your partner did not accurately paraphrase you?

Step 4. After 10 minutes, have the recorder of each group report his / her results to the whole class. This report may want to emphasize related issues: feelings of being understood and the norm of reciprocity.