



# ACTIVE LISTENING

## Listening.

Duration	10 minutes
Material	None
General workshop objectives	Learn to listen consciously; Learn to be present for the other person; Be aware of your behaviours.

### Explanation to teachers

With our noses constantly glued to a screen or our heads crammed full of to-do lists, we're all sometimes guilty of only half listening or of saying "yeah, yeah" without fully realizing what we're agreeing to. The more we learn to listen to our surroundings, for example, the sounds and music we hear, the more attentive we become to others during conversations. This is when the concept of conscious listening takes on its full meaning. We become a better "listener" by paying attention to sensations, emotions and sensitivities (Diaz, 2011 ; Anderson, 2016).

Listening to someone carefully does not mean agreeing with them. Instead, it's about being present for the conversation, being connected to the other person and to yourself, and being curious and non-judgmental.

In the following exercise, the idea is to learn how to listen consciously and sit with the silences (if any). Tell students who are listening that they shouldn't interrupt or contribute to the conversation. When the chosen theme is likely to cause differences of opinion, the exercise can be even more constructive, in that you can encourage the students to notice their sensations and emotions, and how their initial thoughts might change as they take the time to listen to the other person.

### Why listen?

- To develop quality relationships;
- To resolve conflicts;
- To take stock of your perceptions and responses.

### Good to know...

In the same way that pauses are important in music, the periods of silence brought about by mindfulness are crucial to the overall pace of a day. Those moments provide a lot of insight into what's happening in the present moment, both inside and outside of yourself. You can help your students to view these pauses as a rest or a break from the chaos of their thoughts, rather than a duty or an obligation.

(Burdick, 2014)

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Form groups of two students. Ask them to sit facing each other.
2. Choose a topic you think will be interesting to the students and have them take turns talking to the other person about it. The challenge for the listener is not to interrupt the speaker, while making it clear that they are listening.
3. Switch roles after 2 minutes.
4. Ask the students to notice how they feel when it's their turn to speak and when they have to listen. Ask them to notice their sensations, movements, reactions, etc.
5. Encourage the students to practise being open and non-judgmental when they are the listener.
6. Tell the students they don't need to fill in the silences. The listener is not allowed to ask questions. Invite students to welcome these moments and learn to see silence as a good thing, instead of perceiving it as stressful or uncomfortable.
7. Use the following discussion points to wrap up the activity:
  - Did you often feel like interrupting the speaker to give your opinion?
  - Did you look the other person in the eye or did you feel too uncomfortable?
  - What non-verbal cues did you give the speaker to let them know you were listening?
  - How did you feel when you were talking? And during the silences?

## DIGGING DEEPER

Everyday life is full of constant sounds that we either don't notice or that grate on our nerves, such as a phone ringing, a clock ticking, or an alarm clock buzzing. School is no exception. So why not suggest that the students use the bell as a signal to stop, breathe, and tune into the present moment? By learning to refocus on and really listen to everyday sounds, they will create opportunities to practise mindfulness in their daily lives.

### Tip for facilitators

Form random teams so the students don't automatically pair up with their friends. The exercise will work better if the team members aren't familiar with each other.