The Art Of Active Listening

Silence
Allow for comfortable silences to slow down the exchange. Give a person time to think as well as talk. Silence can also be very helpful in diffusing an unproductive interaction.

Minimal encouragers
Use brief, positive prompts to keep the conversation going and show you are listening.
For example: “uh-hmm,” “Oh?”, “I understand”, “Then?”, “And?”

Restating
To show you are listening, repeat every so often what you think the person said — not by parroting, but by paraphrasing what you heard in your own words.
For example: “Let’s see if I’m clear about this. . .”

Summarizing
Bring together the facts and pieces of the problem to check understanding.
For example: “So it sounds to me as if . . .” Or, “Is that it?”

Reflecting
Instead of just repeating, reflect the speaker's words in terms of feelings.
For example, “This seems really important to you. . .”

Emotion labeling and “I” messages
Putting feelings into words will often help a person to see things more objectively.
For example: “I am sensing that you’re feeling frustrated . . . worried . . . anxious.”

Validation
Acknowledge the individual’s problems, issues, and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy, and respond in an interested way.
For example: “I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue. . .”

Effective pause
Deliberately pause at key points for emphasis. This will tell the person you are saying something that is very important to them.

Redirecting
If someone is showing signs of being overly aggressive, agitated, or angry, this is the time to shift the discussion to another topic.
The Art Of Active Listening

**Communication Blockers**

“Why” questions
They tend to make people defensive.

Quick reassurance
“Don’t worry about that.”

**Advising**
“I think the best thing for you is to move to assisted living.”

Digging for information

**Patronizing**
“You poor thing, I know just how you feel.”

**Preaching**
“You should. . .” Or, “You shouldn’t. . .”

**Interrupting**
Shows you aren’t interested in what someone is saying.

**Simple Conversation Courtesies**
“Excuse me...”

“Pardon me....”

“One moment please....”

“How about we talk about solutions?”

“May I suggest something?”

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**The Art of Questioning**

**LEADING**
For example, “Would you like to talk about it?” “What happened then?” Could you tell me more?”

**OPEN-ENDED**

**CLOSED-ENDED**
Use closed ended questions to prompt for specifics.

**REFLECTIVE**
Can help people understand more about what they said.
For example: someone tells you, “I’m worried I won’t remember. . .”

Reflective
Q: “It sounds like you would like some help remembering?”

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