

Listening Exercise

Recommended Age: 12+

Goals

- To illustrate good listening skills.
- To discuss feelings around being listened to and not.

Instructions

- Have youth choose a partner. Have pairs choose a talker and a listener. Ask listening partner to go outside the room with one facilitator.
- Instructions to remaining group: Your partner will come in and sit with you. Talk for 3 minutes about anything: what your future plans are, your favourite TV show, your pets, etc., but nothing too personal.
- Instructions to outside group: When you go in, sit with your partner. They will talk to you for 3 minutes. All they know is that it is their job to talk and yours to listen.
 - First minute: Listen with all of your **best listening** skills.
 - Second minute: Start to **'drift off'** gradually (break eye contact, etc.).
 - Third minute: Keep listening, **but do your best to make it seem like you are paying no attention** (look out the window, flip through your cell, etc.).
- Inform group when each minute has passed. After the three minutes is up, tell the whole group what the instructions were and give them a few seconds for the listener to apologize to the talker.

Debrief

- **"How did it feel to be the talker?" "How did it feel to be the listener?"**
- **"How did the listener listen?" "How did you know they weren't listening?"** Lack of eye contact, texting, acting distracted, etc. What aspects of a listener make it harder to talk about a situation? Feeling like you'll be judged, that they aren't interested,

that they'll spread what you said, feeling uncomfortable with them, etc.

- **“How did you show you were listening in the beginning?”** Body language, nodding, etc. **“Do most of us communicate in minute 1, minute 2, or minute 3?”** Minute 2. It's okay if we aren't able to give great minute 1 style listening to everyone all the time, but it is important to let others know where you are at. Even being honest and saying you are distracted or that you can't listen as well as they deserve and suggesting meeting another time or referring them to another person, a crisis line, a teen clinic, or a guidance counsellor is a good idea.
- A simple way to improve and build healthy relationships is to give people our first minute attention as much as possible and communicate about it when we aren't able to.