

**Tool 3.3****Listening****CLARITY Competence Area:**

Embracing values that sustain the lives of all living beings

GreenComp Competence Area:

Embodying sustainability values

Why use this tool?

In order to embrace and embody new values that sustain the lives of all living beings, a key skill is that of listening without judging, in a spirit of empathy and compassion. This tool enables us to better understand how values vary among people and over time, to respect the perspectives of other people, to connect with the more-than-human world, as well as to become aware of the values we hold ourselves, which can either block us or move us towards more resilience, connection, creativity and regeneration. Because we are not used to listening without judging, this tool takes practice, and when mastered can positively affect all our relationships.

Activity 3.3.1

Active listening

Overview

Active Listening is a basic skill that can be used in any kind of situation and especially to help learners appreciate different perspectives, and to talk fearlessly about facts, beliefs, or emotions that they may otherwise tend to hide. The description of this activity is an introduction to working with Active Listening for learners and teachers who are not already familiar with it.

Curriculum linkage

Language & Literature, Civics & Social Studies, Ethics and Religion & Philosophy.

Competences built

Empathy, presence, critical thinking, integrity and active listening.

Prep

1. Start by watching [this interview](#). In addition to listening, in Active Listening you work with your body in giving response by nodding as well as feedback by humming attentively. This is very well illustrated in this [Tedx Talk](#).
2. Prepare prompts in the form of questions for the class. Some examples are given below.

Steps in the activity

1. Set the scene and sharpen your senses
2. Introduce active listening
3. Active listening sessions 1 & 2
4. Reflection



Learners in pairs during active listening in a nature area.

Photo: Marte Maurabakken/Climate Creativity.



BASIC INFO

Age range:

6+, often a tool for teachers

Duration:

50 minutes in class + prep work

Group size:

Flexible. The group will be divided into pairs.

Level of difficulty:

Basic.

Materials/space required:

Places for quiet conversation - quiet corners, group rooms or outside space that give room for private reflections.

Location:

Flexible

Engagement of external stakeholders:

No



Please note that the steps below can also be practiced as stand alone activities once the learners have understood the principles of active listening.

Step 1: Set the scene and sharpen your senses (15 min., optional)

This step is optional and you can start with step 2 directly if you prefer.

1. Start by playing a game.
2. First stand or sit in a circle.
3. Invite everybody to come up with a simple movement to express how they feel right now – without using words.
4. Go around the circle and let everybody express their feeling and if possible timewise, also let the group mimic each learner's movement.
5. Invite reflections among the group, focusing on the two questions below:
6. Did you understand what the others meant when expressing a feeling/emotion?
7. Was it easy or difficult to understand?

Step 2: Introduce Active Listening (10 min.)

1. Make sure this activity is practised on a voluntary basis, by explaining what the activity is about. Let them know that all information exchanged through the exercise should remain confidential.
2. Organise the learners in pairs, in an environment where they feel secure and in a way so they can see each other's expressions.
3. If there are two teachers in the room, you could introduce active listening by performing a short demonstration showing the opposite of active listening (looking away, tapping your foot impatiently, looking at your phone). Follow up by asking the other teacher how this made them feel, and ask the learners what you can do to be a better listener, and probably the learners will come up with many of the principles of active listening.
4. Introduce key principles to active listening:
 - a. Let the other person talk without interruption.
 - b. Give space to each other – a little silence gives the listener time to respond and the speaker to reflect.



- c. When posing questions, after the speaker has spoken, first let there be a moment of silence and then use open questions, for example: what..., how....
 - d. Repeat or rephrase key words or sentences you heard
 - e. Give feedback by highlighting some of the topics, or summarising
5. Close the introduction by opening up for questions for 3 minutes.

Step 3: Active Listening Sessions 1 & 2 (12 min.)

1. Invite learners to take on the roles of the speaker and the listener for the first session, using the questions you prepared in advance. The speaker may rephrase the question if needed and is free to speak at their own pace. Regarding the listener, a suggestion is to choose and practise one or two of the listening key principles. The listener can invite the speaker to begin by asking: "what are your thoughts about ..."
2. Let the speaker talk for five minutes.
3. Now you ask them to switch roles and repeat the exercise.



Learners in pairs and trios during active listening in a nature area.

Photos: Marte Maurabakken/Climate Creativity.

Step 4: Reflection (10 min.)

1. Invite the learners to reflect for themselves and write down their thoughts for 2 minutes. Guiding questions can be:
 - a. How did it feel to listen?
 - b. How did it feel to be heard?



2. Invite the learners to reflect together on the exercise for 2 minutes.
3. Reflect as a whole group for 5 minutes.
4. Write down some takeaways.



Dos and don'ts

Adaptations:

Examples of prompts:

- Describe a place you like, and where you feel calm or safe.
- Tell about a time when someone helped you – or when you helped someone else.
- Share something you care about when it comes to nature or the climate.

If your learners are young, you may wish to start by introducing only one or two of the key principles of active listening. For example, these:

- Let the other person talk without interruption.
- When you don't understand, try to use open questions, for example: what do you mean by..., how do you ...

You can also introduce the video clip below to the young learners, and ask them the following questions: What do you think is the difference in the ways they talk to each other? What do you think made BingBong start talking? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t685WM5R6aM>

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

References

Active Listening is a tool adapted by Legacy17 for CLARITY, yet it's important to recognise that many other versions of active listening exist – as it rightly should. Listening is one of the most vital elements of communication, and a diversity of approaches helps meet different needs and contexts.

For further reading and deeper instructions please follow the link:

<https://hostingtransformation.eu/method/30187/>

Center, N. P., & Borhan, C. (2022). Those who Listen, Change the World: The Little Book on Dialogue.



Resources



To support your learners with the instructions on how to listen: this instructional image can be put on screen or printed. Providing learners with instructions that are always visible or accessible supports their ability to concentrate, as it reduces the load on their working memory and frees up mental space for focusing on the task itself.



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