

**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 3.3.2

Deep listening with others

Overview

Listening deeply to others is a skill that can help older learners, and teachers, to access empathy and deep levels of intuition, for instance in order to clarify questions, nourish relationships, and generate new ideas. It can be used for peer coaching. Fundamental to the method is the willingness to practice removing inner censorship and other obstacles to hearing what the other person means, and not just what they say. It is not something you learn overnight. Conversely, it is something that everyone can do, with practice.

Curriculum linkage

Language & Literature, Physical Education & Health (wellbeing and mindfulness), Civics & Social Studies, Cross-Curricular & Global Competencies and Ethics, Religion & Philosophy.

Competences built

Empathy, presence, self-reflection, deep listening, integrity and perspective taking.

Prep

- Prepare a prompt for the learners to put into their own words. For example, in connection with an exercise focused on values, you might start by suggesting "What do I most value in nature?" or "My experience with a specific animal or place".
- During the introduction of the exercise the learners are invited to rephrase until the question resonates with them and their situation.
- Also prepare and rehearse any introduction that brings the listener towards the point of inner silence. This should be used in step 2 "prepare for listening". As a suggestion



BASIC INFO

Age range:

15+

Duration:

5 minutes/person

Group size:

Flexible: Break-out groups of 2 or 3 people

Level of difficulty:

Intermediate

Materials/space required:

- If you use chairs, arrange them so the learners are not facing each other.
- Paper and pen for noting personal questions and reflections.
- Timer for timekeeping.

Location:

Indoor or outdoor space that gives room for private reflection.

Engagement of external stakeholders:

No



for such an instruction please see the script for “Entering your inner silence” provided in Activity 3.3.3 Deep Listening to yourself.

Steps in the activity

1. Introducing the exercise
2. Preparing for listening
3. Listening
4. Plenary reflections
5. Noting down reflections

Step 1: Introducing the exercise

1. **Make sure this activity is practiced on a voluntary basis**, by letting the learners know what it is about. Let them know that all information exchanged through the exercise should remain confidential.
2. **Introduce five modes of listening.** Deep Listening can be described as five modes of listening. As a beginner it can be good to practice them one at a time, and to start with the first mode of listening (“be silence”). When more experienced, you can weave them together. The different modes of listening are:
 - a. **Be silence:** Do not respond in any way to the speaker, either with words or with body language. Look away. No eye contact.
 - b. **Give attention:** Focus your entire self on what the speaker is saying, to the exclusion of all else.
 - c. **Be empathic:** Enter the talker's story and – to the extent that feels comfortable for you – live it as your own. Feel it in your body, your mind, your spirit, as if you were living the story. Be aware, however, that it is still the speaker's story, not yours; if the speaker is distressed, maintain a ‘safe’ distance, for instance through a breathing exercise, movement, or other ways you find useful for regulating your own emotions.
 - d. **Be non-judgmental:** This can be a difficult practice when the talker offers images (values, ideas, intentions) in conflict with yours!
 - e. **Be “empty”:** Put aside (“park”) your present: your longings, knowledge and experience, hopes, dreams, problems, visions.



Step 2:

Preparing for listening

1. Explain the deep listening exercise. In a nutshell, tell the learners to not respond to the speaker, and not engage in a dialogue.
2. Invite learners to walk side by side during the exercise, or position chairs/seating so that they **do not easily see each other**.
3. Decide on how much time each learner will have to speak.
4. Describe the exercise by explaining to the learners they will have to listen deeply to each other in pairs or trios, taking turns to be the speaker, the listener, and (if you are a trio) an observer. Each person in turn has a time (the same for each) to speak; the other(s) practice Deep Listening.
5. Ask the learners to decide who will speak first within each pair.
6. Explain to learners that if it is their turn to speak and they “run out” of things to say before the end of their time, that’s fine. They can keep silent or speak again when they wish to say something else.
7. Explain to learners that they should **only say what they feel comfortable saying**. If something about the question feels too private or precious to put into words at this moment, they should follow their instincts.
8. For the listener, explain that they should start by practicing the first mode, “Be silence”.
9. When there is an observer, explain that the groups should allow 2-3 minutes after each listening session for the observer to express their observations. This is not a place for discussion, but another chance to practice non-judgmental listening.



Learners sitting back to back in nature, during a deep listening exercise.

Photos: Marte Maurabakken/Climate Creativity.



Step 3: Listening

1. Keep track of time.
2. Remind the pairs/trios when it is time to change roles.

Step 4: Plenary reflections

1. On a voluntary basis, invite a few learners to reflect on their experience as listeners, and comment on the experience of listening without showing a response to what was being said.
2. On a voluntary basis, invite a few learners to reflect on their experience as *speakers* and comment on their experience. Make it clear that you are not inviting them to speak about the content of their own Deep Listening, but about the quality of the experience when speaking about it.
3. Invite *observers*, if any, to say - without judgement - what they observed, and to comment on the 'observer' role.

Step 5: Noting down reflections

Learners may be given time to note down personal insights at the end of the process. There is no intended harvest as in gathering content of each learner.



Dos and don'ts

Adaptations:

If your learners are younger than 15, then 3.3.1 Active Listening is probably a better choice.

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

The activity is designed by Legacy17. It is based on **Deep Listening** – a key method of the *Enspirited Envisioning* program developed and taught by Professor Warren Ziegler, a former teacher of futures studies at Syracuse University, USA. For several decades he worked with workshop learners from the public sector, academia, business, NGOs and Indigenous groups.

For further reading and more detailed instructions:

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

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



Co-funded by
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