TIPS FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

Set an Intention This will help you stay focused on the goals and tone of the conversation from the beginning. For example, ask yourself, “What do I want to learn?” or “How can I show support?”

Express Your Needs If you need to fidget or use a tool to help you focus, such as a fidget toy or doodling on paper, let the other person know. Explain that these actions help you stay engaged in the conversation and are not signs of distraction.

Stay Focused and Present Put aside distractions and concentrate on the conversation at hand. Focus on what the other person is saying and try to follow through on the conversation’s goals.

Ask Questions Asking questions is a simple but powerful way to show you’re engaged in the conversation. It also helps you better understand what the other person is saying. Ask for clarification if something is unclear or ask open-ended questions to keep the dialogue going.

Body language is communication, too. Small physical responses like nodding, smiling, or changing your facial expression based on what is being said show the speaker that you are actively listening.

Avoid Interrupting Let the speaker finish their thoughts before responding. Interrupting can break the flow of the conversation and may make the other person feel unheard.

Don’t Plan Your Response Stay fully present in their words and thoughts. Trust that you will be able to respond after they’ve finished, once you’ve fully understood their perspective.

Paraphrase and Summarize To show that you’re really listening, try paraphrasing or summarizing what the other person has said. For example, you could say, “So what I’m hearing is...” or “It sounds like you’re feeling...” This confirms that you’ve understood them and helps clarify if needed.

Take Notes if Needed This can be especially useful for people who struggle with focus or memory. Just let the other person know you’re taking notes so they understand it’s for clarity, not because you’re distracted.