

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 1: Geese to Geese

How does it feel to be really listened to?

Are we open to learning new ways of listening?

What prevents us from listening?

**Aim:** To make us think about what can prevent us from listening

**Numbers:** 5 participants or above

**Time Needed:** 20 minutes (10 minutes activity, 10 minutes discussion)

### Resources

- Space for people to complete the task
- Music or equipment to make noise
- Prepared sentences for each line (you can make these up)
- Space in the room
- Clock or timer

### Steps

1. Gather your group into one line (if you have more than 10 people you can divide into 2/3 lines)
2. At the end of the line, whisper a phrase or short sentence to the first person (this sentence should be up to 8 words, preferably not making sense) and tell them to pass it on using only whispers, one person at a time.
3. Participants can only repeat the phrase or sentence once.
4. While participants are busy passing the message along to the next person in line, create some white noise, talk to individuals, play music, distract them in some way.
5. This will make it more difficult to concentrate
6. When the messages have reached the end of the line the last participant to receive the message will repeat out loud what they have heard.
7. The first person who received the message will then say what the original message was, and the group can compare it to the final message heard.
8. After this, you can discuss the activity in a large group for at least 10 minutes

### Discussion

Whilst we are trying to mimic real life, whispers can make it much harder to hear. This is a fun practical way to give examples of what prevents us from listening. It is likely that the sentence heard will be different from the beginning to end of the line, why might this happen? Noise is one of the biggest factors that interferes with listening and your ability to understand what is being said. When there is external noise people often use eye contact and lip reading to gain extra clues while the other person is speaking. Distractions can be internal or external. External distractions include auditory, visual, or physical noise. Internal distractions may be psychological or emotional. In order to best focus in on a speaker's message, try to eliminate as many distractions as possible.

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 2: Being listened to

**Aim:** To breakdown listening skills and analyse how being listened to makes you feel

**Numbers:** Ideally above 4

**Time Needed:** 20 minutes (10 minutes preparation and activity, 10 minutes discussion)

#### Resources

- Space for people to work in groups and in pairs
- Handout example 'Being listened to' (See below)
- Flipchart/whiteboard
- Pens for group and for whiteboard
- Clock or timer

#### Steps

1. Ask the group to work in pairs
2. Give out handouts 'Being Listened to' (see below)
3. For 2 minutes ask each person to individually think of a time when they felt someone really listened to them
4. Ask them to fill out the sheet writing down who this person was
5. For another 2 minutes ask them to think about what this person did that made them feel listened to
6. For 5 minutes ask the pairs to discuss what they have written
7. For 10 minutes get the group to come together, listen to each person's comments and write up what each person said
8. Ask if anyone can think of anything else that would make them feel that they were listened to

#### Discussion

What can we do to become an effective listener? How do we improve our active listening skills?

Did the speaker:

- Use good non-verbal communication, smile, open body language etc?
- Keep an open mind?
- Not interrupt or cut the partner off?
- Did they use open questions?
- Give partner time to talk?

# HOW NOT WHAT

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 2: Being listened to

#### Resources

#### Being listened to handout

**Please think of a person/occasion when you felt listened to**

**Who was this person?**

**What did they do to make you feel listened to?**

**Group comments**

**Please add comments from the group, are they different to yours?  
Would being listened to like this help you?**

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 2: Being listened to

#### Resources

#### Useful Information

#### Are we actively listening?

Active listening is when the listener feeds back what they hear to the speaker, it also involves observing and assessing the speaker's behaviour and body language.

Equally powerful is the concept of 'managing the silence', when we allow the speaker the time they need to collect and sort out their thoughts, we may find that they have time to calm their nerves and end up with a clearer view of what they want to say.

#### Levels of listening

**Downloading listening** – is when we are listening, but we are just taking in words, we are not open to new ideas.

**Attentive listening** – is when we are listening, and our body language reflects a listening mode and we feel we are open to new ideas, but at the same time, we may feel we know more than the other person. We are sticking to our judgements, agenda and needs.

**Empathic listening** – is when we are listening and starting to see the world the way the other person sees it. 'Standing in another's shoes', 'listening with the intention of listening and not talking over someone'.

**Emergent listening** – is achieved with practice: it is when we are really listening. We are listening in a way that makes us feel that we can understand things differently, our curiosity is aroused. We are open to changing our world view. We learn most in this mode of listening. When providing support to others emergent listening is what we should try to develop and model.

With emergent listening we are offering

- A safe space – where judgement plays no role
- Unconditional respect for someone I can learn from
- A chance for the other person to be their best, to be creative and to collaborate

We need to

- Stay calm and allow the conversation to 'flow over us'
- Capture ideas and not words
- Develop our own self-awareness as we practise emergent listening

Emergent listening is not about me. Separate my needs from theirs; reflect back what we notice and ask 'powerful' open questions.

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 3: Drawing what we hear

How do we use open questions to encourage people to open up?

How can we make sure we have understood what someone is asking?

How do we all do this whilst checking that we are not being judgmental?

**Aim:** How open and closed questions can help us have a better understanding

**Numbers:** Minimum 4

**Time Needed:** 20 minutes (10 minutes preparation and activity, 10 minutes discussion)

### Resources

- Space for participants to work in pairs and space for the group to come together as a group
- Pens/pencils and paper for participants who take the role as listener
- Handout 1 - Picture resource for exercise in pairs (see below)
- Handout 2 - Examples of open and closed questions for exercise in pairs (see below)
- Information about open and closed questions (see below)
- Timer or clock

### Steps

1. Provide 1 copy of Handout 1 (see below), for every two participants.
2. Write the examples of open and closed questions (Handout 2) on a flip chart or white board.
3. Go through the information about open and closed questions (below) with the group.
4. Divide the group into pairs and ask them to practice asking open and closed questions.
5. Explain how open and closed questions can give you different information.
6. Explain that one person in the pair will get a printout of a picture which should be kept secret. The other person will try to find out what the picture is by asking either open or closed questions. At the end, the person guessing what the picture is will attempt to draw it.
7. Give one picture to each person answering the questions, do this so that the other person cannot see the picture. Each pair should be given the same picture.
8. The other person in the pair has 1 minute to ask questions. Different pairs will be asked to either use open questions or closed questions. The person answering the questions must not reveal the name of the picture in any description.
9. The person asking the questions might want to take notes of all the answers.
10. After 1 minute, the person who has asked the questions will draw the picture.
11. Bring the group together to share their drawings, comparing them to the original. You can then discuss which are closest to the original picture. It is likely that the drawings where open questions are used will be more like the original than those using closed questions
12. If you have time, swap the roles around using a different picture.

### Discussion

Discuss the use of open questions and how these can be important in finding out more information.

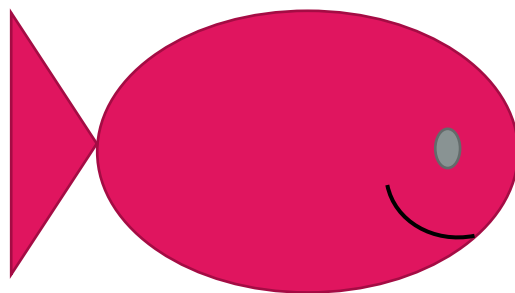
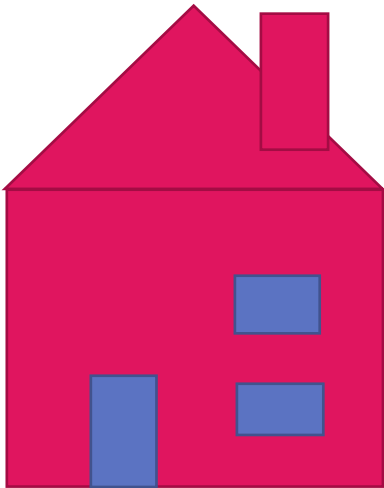
# HOW NOT WHAT

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 3: Drawing what we hear

#### Resources

Handout 1 - Picture resource for exercise in pairs



## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 3: Drawing what we hear

#### Resources

#### Handout 2 - Examples of open and closed questions for exercise in pairs

You might want to help your participants otherwise let them come up with the questions themselves.

You can write these up on a white board or flip chart or print these off.

#### Examples of open questions that you can use for this task

- Tell me more about the drawing?
- Can you describe the drawing?
- What instructions can you give me to help me draw the picture?

#### Examples of closed questions that you can use for this task

- Is it big?
- Does it have straight lines?
- Is it living?

# HOW NOT WHAT

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 3: Drawing what we hear

#### Resources

#### Information about open and closed questions

You can open up conversations with powerful 'open' questions that start with the '6 little helpers'  
1. Why 2. What 3. When 4. How – How did that make you feel? 5. Who 6. Where

#### What do open Questions do?

- Establish a rapport – 'That sounds different; can you tell me more?'
- Help you gain background information – 'Perhaps you would like to start?'
- Usually require longer answers than closed questions.
- They allow the listener an opportunity to engage and to feel equal and included.
- Indicate to the listener 'I'm listening, now it's your turn to open up and speak'
- Remember, you can always answer a question with a question.... 'why do you think that is?'

#### Examples of open questions

1. How can I help you?
2. Tell me about your main concern.
3. Can you tell me a bit more about what's going on?
4. What might help right now?
5. Tell me more...

Open Questions allow a person to think and it gives them the opportunity to choose the direction that they want to travel. This helps them to think of new ideas, different possibilities and choose the path that is right for them.

#### What do closed questions do? – (where the answer is yes or No)

- Can close down the conversation
- Do not allow the listener to feel fully engaged...
- Can sometimes feel like a trap...
- Help you gain confirmation of an opinion
- Helps you get specific information

#### Examples of closed questions

1. Can I help you?
2. Did that make you feel sad?
3. Would it help if I...?

Simple questions are the best and shorter questions have much more impact. We often do not ask short questions because it may appear rude, in these situations it is best to consider non-verbal cues including tone of voice. The aim is to ask challenging questions to help the person make their own decisions.



## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 4: Making judgements

**Aim:** To help us understand some of the barriers to listening

**Numbers:** Minimum 4

**Time Needed:** 20 minutes (10 minutes preparation and activity, 10 minutes discussion)

#### Resources

- Space for participants to work in pairs and space for the group to come together as a group
- Handout 1 – Photos for exercise in pairs (see below)
- Questions for discussion for exercise in pairs (see below)
- Timer or clock

#### Steps

1. Ask the group to divide into pairs.
2. Ask them to look at the photos in Handout 1 (see below) and think about who they would sit next to and why?
3. Bring the group together to discuss their choices using the questions for discussion below.

#### Discussion

What happens if we judge someone we meet, are we making assumptions, does this mean we are listening properly?

# HOW NOT WHAT

## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 4: Making judgments

### Resources

Handout 1 – Photos for exercise in pairs

## Who should I sit next to on the bus?



## HOW DO WE REALLY LISTEN?

### Activity 4: Making judgments

#### Resources

#### Questions for discussion for exercise in pairs

You might want to write these on a flip chart or white board for discussion

1. Why did we choose that person?
2. Why might we make judgements?
3. Why do our brains make assumptions?