

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is listening that truly involves the listener as well as the speaker. It is **not** passive, simply nodding one's head as one thinks about other things or what one is going to say next.

The skill of ACTIVE LISTENING includes three sub-skills:

1. **ATTENDING BEHAVIOR:** non-verbally communicating, "I am interested in what you have to say," or "I want to hear what you have to say," or at least, "I'm willing to hear what you have to say," or "I'm not afraid of what you have to say; I can handle it."

Generally, in order of importance:

- A. **Eye contact** with the other person
- B. **Face** the other person
- C. **Body open** to the other person (arms and legs uncrossed)
- D. **Incline** body towards the other person

Avoiding interruptions is also a way of granting the speaker a sense of importance -- if in an office, close door, have calls held, don't read materials on your desk, don't write except to make notes related to what you and the person are talking about.

2. Listening for content and letting the other person know you have heard the main ideas, data, etc., by **PARAPHRASING** -- summarizing or briefly restating in your own words the main ideas of what the other person was communicating. This allows for misunderstanding to be cleared up quickly; it also give the speaker a sense of really being heard.

3. Listening for the feeling(s) being communicated and the letting the other person know you heard (and accept) his/her feelings by tentatively **NAMING THE FEELING**. This is a wonderful way to show the other person you accept them as a whole person -- a being with feelings as well as ideas.

