

## Active Listening is Communication too

All of us can hear, but all of us cannot listen. Hearing and listening are not the same. Hearing is involuntary, while listening involves the reception and interpretation of what is heard. It decodes the sound heard meaningfully.

Does a knock on the door sound the same all the time? What if you are alone and you hear a knock late at night? What happens if you hear a knock when you are expecting someone whom you like?

Active listening involves listening with a purpose. It may be to gain information, obtain directions, understand others, solve problems, share interests, see how the other person feels, or even show support. This type of listening takes the same amount of, or more, energy than speaking. It requires the listener to hear various messages, understand the meaning and then verify the meaning by offering feedback, or confirming by paraphrasing what was heard.

Following are some of the tips for good listening:

- Maintain eye contact
- Sit or stand in a receptive position, lean forward
- Encourage by using positive gestures and words
- Remove distractions
- Understand non-verbal signals
- Stop talking or doing what you were doing before you began listening
- Give time for listening
- Do not pass judgments or criticise mid-way while some one is speaking
- Reflect on the feeling expressed and paraphrase what has been heard
- Have patience

As an ASHA, keep the following points in mind while communicating with your community.

- Never discriminate on the basis of caste and class while communicating with the community. Your tone and gesture should not change while talking to socially and economically disadvantaged community members. Talk to them with respect and dignity.
- A community has immense knowledge and experience. Give people a chance to share and use it. Do not treat them like empty vessels.
- Never make any comment which emphasises gender inequality. Your communication should be gender-sensitive.
- Do not react fast. Listen, assimilate, analyse and then react.