**Listening Guide**

Engaged listening is a crucial skill for building strong relationships, fostering effective communication, and making people feel heard and valued. Here are key practices that help one to become a better engaged listener:

**CONNECT**

1. **Remove Distractions:** Find a quiet, comfortable space free from distractions like phones, emails, or background noise. This shows your commitment to the conversation.
2. **Show Open Body Language:** Position your body in a way that is open and welcoming, such as facing the speaker, using relaxed and open gestures, and avoiding defensive postures.
3. **Be Present:** Focus your attention on the speaker and the message they are conveying. When appropriate, maintain eye contact with the speaker. It conveys your attentiveness and interest in what they are saying. Pay attention to body language and tone of voice.

**ENGAGE**

1. **Use Verbal and Nonverbal Cues: U**se verbal cues like "I see," “yes,” "I understand," and nonverbal cues like nodding to show that you are actively engaged and listening.
2. **Don't Interrupt:** Resist the urge to interrupt or interject with your thoughts or opinions. Let the speaker finish their thoughts before responding.
3. **Practice Patience:** Give the speaker time to express themselves fully. Sometimes, people need a moment to gather their thoughts or emotions.
4. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage the speaker to share more by asking open-ended questions that invite elaboration, such as "Can you tell me more about that?" or "What do you think could be a solution?"
5. **Paraphrase and Reflect:** Summarize what the speaker has said in your own words to confirm your understanding. For example, "So, if I understand correctly, you're saying..."
6. **Avoid Judgment:** Suspend judgment and refrain from making premature assessments or forming opinions. Everyone's perspective is valid, and understanding their viewpoint is crucial.
7. **Show Empathy:** Acknowledge and try to understand the speaker's feelings and underlying motivations, even if you don't agree with their point of view. Express empathy by saying things like, "I have also felt frustrated in that kind of situation,"“that makes sense that you are feeling this way,” or “that makes me angry also just hearing about it.”
8. **Be Mindful of Cultural Differences:** Respect and be aware of cultural differences in communication styles and norms. Some cultures may have different expectations for listening and responding.

**FOCUS ON THE SPEAKER’S PERSPECTIVE**

1. **Manage Your Own Emotions:** Keep your emotions in check during the conversation. Your emotional reactions should not overshadow the speaker's message.
2. **Offer Support:** Unless explicitly asked for advice, refrain from offering solutions or advice. Listen first. Focus on understanding and supporting the speaker's perspective first. Offer support if appropriate for the situation and if sought after by the speaker.
3. **Provide Validation:** Validate the speaker's feelings and experiences. Let them know that their thoughts and emotions are valid and respected.

**ONGOING**

1. **Follow Up:** After the conversation, consider following up to check on the person or topic discussed. This demonstrates your ongoing interest and commitment to their well-being or concerns.
2. **Seek Feedback:** Ask for feedback on your listening skills. Others can provide valuable insights into how well you are making them feel heard.
3. **Practice Regularly:** Engaged listening is a skill that improves with practice. Make an effort to apply these techniques in your daily interactions.

Remember that engaged listening is not just about hearing words; it's about understanding, empathizing, and making the speaker feel valued and respected. By consistently applying these principles, you can become a more effective and empathetic listener.