

1. Describe a situation in which you were communicating with someone by highlighting the communication style you employed before learning about active listening strategies. What are the challenges you faced in these interactions?

Prior to becoming acquainted with active listening, I tended to communicate in a passive, distracted way. Something that resonates in my mind is during a group project in university. A teammate of mine was trying to express her concerns about how we allocated the workload. I was doing that thing we all do these days when you check your phone and think about all the other assignments you have while someone is talking to you. I nodded every so often and replied with monosyllabic phrases, “yeah,” “I see,” but I wasn’t actually fully there in that conversation.

This mode of communication posed many difficulties. For one thing, I failed to take in the key information she was trying to communicate about feeling overwhelmed and needing assistance with one aspect of the project. Consequently, we kept the same workflow, which added more danger for her, and finally we ended up working separately. My disengagement further led her to feel neglected and unappreciated. Our team dynamic, however, suffered, and our progress was delayed because we needed to revisit and modify our plan later.

I listened to the reply, not to understand, and that was the problem. I did not ask follow-up questions or show empathy. According to Brownell (2012), effective listening involves paying attention, understanding, and responding appropriately. At that time, I didn't have any of the three. A lack of communication led to this event, which drove home the fact that my listening skills could have been improved, requiring me to listen more closely with an empathetic ear.

2. After gaining knowledge of active listening theory, how did your approach evolve?

Please provide an example of the conversation.

Upon discovering active listening, I realized we have to be all ears and fully invested in the conversation. It is listening attentively, without interruption and with verbal and non-verbal feedback to demonstrate that the speaker is being fully engaged (Rogers & Farson, 2015). It also means paraphrasing what the speaker says to accurately understand it.

One instance of how this approach changed for me involved the rehearsal of a classmate's presentation. She appeared shaky and uncertain of the material. I applied active listening techniques because after the presentation, instead of giving fast feedback and being a critique. I sustained eye contact, nodded and used phrases like "I hear you" and "That makes sense." I also restated her concerns by saying, "So you're feeling uncertain about the intro part because it doesn't have a seamless flow?" This made her feel seen and led to more clarity in her expression.

In addition, I asked open-ended questions like, "What part do you feel most confident about?" and "Do you want to review that part together?" Those questions demonstrated to me that I wasn't a passive recipient of her words but was trying to help her along her journey of doing the work. As Wolvin and Coakley (2016) say, active listening builds trust and cooperation, which I thought was exactly the case here. She thanked me for the feedback and commented later that my tone made her feel secure and less anxious.

In this conversation, I used techniques such as summarizing, reflecting feelings, and offering respectful feedback. It improved the quality of communication and strengthened our academic

relationship. I learned that active listening, really, is more than simply listening — it's about creating a safe space for communication and understanding one's full message, verbal and emotional.

Through this experience, I realized that listening actively is not only beneficial in academic settings but also in strengthening personal relationships. I learned it that has made me more empathetic and an effective communicator. Actively listening can improve our interpersonal interactions and general communication competence (Purdy & Borisoff, 1997).

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