**Remote Field Crisis Management**

Session Title: 2.2 Learning activity 3

Duration: 45 minutes

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| **Aim of the session** | | To give participants an opportunity to practice one of the key tools for family liaison: active listening | |
| **Objectives:**  By the end of this session participants will be able to:   * Explain active listening * Outline the four key components of active listenting: summarising, paraphrasing, asking good questions and body language | | | |
| **Key Learning points:**   * Active listening is an intent to “listen for meaning,” in which the l * Active listeners check the meaning with the speaker to see that the statement has been correctly heard and understood with a goal of mutual understanding. | | | |
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| **Timing** | **What to do and say *(methodology)*** | | **What you need *(resources)*** |
| 5’ | **Introduction: What is active listening**  Given the session we’ve just had on family liaison, ask the group to refresh us all on some tips for family liaison. It is likely that something about ‘listening’ will come up. Introduce the concept of Active Listening and ask the group is anyone knows what it is. Lead a short discussion on how active listening might be different from other types of listening.  Use **Slide 2** to define active listening. Ask the group why this skill would be especially important for family liaison. | |  |
| 5’ | **Exercise**  Use **Slide 3**  to lead a short exercise to get the participants thinking about how they like to be listened to:  1. Reflect individually for a few minutes on a time **when you felt someone was “actively listening” to you.**  2. Turn to the person next to you and **discuss the qualities that made this person a good active listener.**  Debrief with **Slide 4**. Active listening help us:   * Understand positions, doubts, needs and objections of others * Gain influence by knowing motivations needs and objections of others * Identify areas of agreement/consensus * Avoid misunderstandings * Develop additional ideas and creative solutions * Listen before giving our opinion or voicing our disagreement. | |  |
| 15’ | **Four components**  Use **Slide 5** to introduce the four components of active listening. Then work through the components with **Slides 7 – 10.** Note that there is no slide content for ‘body language’, as it is so culturally specific. But ask the group to put forward a few good tips about body language. | | Flipchart and markers |
| 15’ | **Practice!**  Put participants in threes (speaker, listener and observer) and ask them to practice active listening using the instructions on **Slide 12.** If they keep their sessions to about five minutes each, they could conceivably each have a turn. | |  |
| 5’ | **Debrief**  Have a short discussion about how it went and reinforce the need to practice speaking to families and media! | |  |

**Supporting information for facilitators:**

**About Active Listening**

The way to become a better listener is to practice "active listening." This is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, try to understand the complete message being sent.

In order to do this you must pay attention to the other person very carefully.

You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by whatever else may be going on around you, or by forming counter arguments that you'll make when the other person stops speaking. Nor can you allow yourself to get bored, and lose focus on what the other person is saying. All of these contribute to a lack of listening and understanding.

**Tip:**

If you're finding it particularly difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating their words mentally as they say them – this will reinforce their message and help you stay focused.

To enhance your listening skills, you need to let the other person know that you are listening to what he or she is saying. To understand the importance of this, ask yourself if you've ever been engaged in a conversation when you wondered if the other person was listening to what you were saying. You wonder if your message is getting across, or if it's even worthwhile continuing to speak. It feels like talking to a brick wall and it's something you want to avoid.

Acknowledgement can be something as simple as a nod of the head or a simple "uh huh." You aren't necessarily agreeing with the person, you are simply indicating that you are listening. Using body language and other signs to acknowledge you are listening also reminds you to pay attention and not let your mind wander.

You should also try to respond to the speaker in a way that will both encourage him or her to continue speaking, so that you can get the information if you need. While nodding and "uh huhing" says you're interested, an occasional question or comment to recap what has been said communicates that you understand the message as well.

**Becoming an Active Listener**

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they say.

**1. Pay Attention**

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

* Look at the speaker directly.
* Put aside distracting thoughts.
* Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
* Avoid being distracted by environmental factors. For example, side conversations.
* "Listen" to the speaker's body language.

**2. Show That You're Listening**

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

* Nod occasionally.
* Smile and use other facial expressions.
* Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
* Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

**3. Provide Feedback**

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

* Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is," and "Sounds like you are saying," are great ways to reflect back.
* Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say." "Is this what you mean?"
* Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

Tip:

If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: "I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?"

**4. Defer Judgment**

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

* Allow the speaker to finish each point before asking questions.
* Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

**5. Respond Appropriately**

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

* Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
* Assert your opinions respectfully.
* Treat the other person in a way that you think he or she would want to be treated.

Key Points

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if your listening habits are as bad as many people's are, then there's a lot of habit-breaking to do!

Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself frequently that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Set aside all other thoughts and behaviors and concentrate on the message. Ask questions, reflect, and paraphrase to ensure you understand the message. If you don't, then you'll find that what someone says to you and what you hear can be amazingly different!

Start using active listening today to become a better communicator, improve your workplace productivity, and develop better relationships.

From Mind Tools: <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/ActiveListening.htm>