

07 ACTIVE LISTENING & RELATIONSHIP BASED PRACTICE

Skills in **relationship-based early intervention** include the capacity to:

- 1) listen carefully;
- 2) demonstrate concern and empathy;
- 3) observe and highlight the parent/child relationship;
- 4) respond thoughtfully in emotionally intense interactions. (Gilkerson & Taylor Ritzler, 2005).

Good relationship-based practice requires excellent communication, emotional attunement, a high level of emotional intelligence and impeccable use of self.

(Sarah McCulloch, *Tutor in Social Work at the University of Strathclyde*)

01 WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

Active listening is a way of listening that involves full attention to what is being said for the primary purpose of understanding the speaker.

"You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time."

(M. Scott Peck, *'The Road Less Travelled'*)

Active Listening differs from critical listening, in that you are not evaluating the message of the other person with the goal of offering your own opinion. Rather, the goal is simply for the other person to be heard, and perhaps to solve their own problems

02 ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Active listening is the key to strong communication skills and it is a skill that we can train and improve.

Active listening is a helpful skill for any worker to develop. It helps you truly understand what people are saying in conversations and meetings (and not just what you want to hear, or think you hear).

Education corner
Education That Matters™

Active Listening Skills

- Ask open-ended questions
- Request clarification
- Be attentive
- Summarize
- Paraphrase
- Reflect feelings
- Be attuned to feelings
- Ask probing questions

06 WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE & PARENTS SAY

"If your social worker doesn't listen it makes you feel less important." (young person)

"Whenever they see us they need to stop saying I know how you feel when they actually DON'T!

They think they know how to deal with your situation because they've dealt with other children they think are like you, but they don't." (young person)

"The more you ask social services for care and support, the more they are querying your parenting skills" (mother)

It is a human want to understand and be understood

(Howe (2009)

Open questions can't be answered simply. They require some thought, and work well if you are trying to stimulate discussion and encourage reflection.

Invite people to explore their thoughts, feelings and perspectives.

'How do you feel when.....?'

How do you think we should address this problem?'

'What would you do if?'

If you think someone has reached a decision prematurely

- 'I'm wondering if there are other issues that need to be considered.'

Practice Tips:

Building trust and establishing rapport – 'Tell me what I can do to help'

Demonstrating concern – 'I am keen to help', 'I know you are going through some tough challenges'

Paraphrasing to show understanding – 'So you are saying...'

Making use of the Wellbeing SHANARRI Prompts: [here](#)



03 LISTENING STYLES

The people-oriented listener – is interested in the speaker.

Action/Task-oriented listeners – are primarily interested in finding out what the speaker wants.

Content-oriented listeners – are interested in the message itself, whether it makes sense, what it means, and whether it's accurate.

People using a time-oriented listening style – prefer a message that gets to the point quickly.

05 FRAMING QUESTIONS

04 QUESTIONS & ACTIVE LISTENING

Prompting questions

encourage the person to open up, they often start with, what, where, which, and how.

Open questions can be used to clarify something or to find out more detail about it. Take care not over-use them as this can make people feel as if they are being interrogated or even attacked.

Paraphrasing questions are one of the best ways you can check your own understanding of what the speaker has said

What are we trained to listen out for?

- Information we require for assessment purposes

What happens when we listen out for signs of:

- What people want and how they are already coping
- Descriptions of the future (personal outcomes)

S. R. Covey *'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People'*

Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood