Advocacy & Communication SOLUTIONS

Key Active Listening Techniques[1]:

Techniques	Purpose	Approach	Language	Example
Encouraging	To convey interest. To keep the person talking.	Don't agree or disagree with speaker. Use non-committal words with positive tone of voice.	–I see… –Uh–huh… –That's interesting… –Tell me more about…	–Use when facilitating a new group or one that has significant challenges. –When people are in a tough spot with each other or they are brand new, they might not understand what is going on. Encouragement will help bring the group along.
Restating or Paraphrasing	To show that you are listening and understanding. To help the speaker grasp the facts.	Restate the speaker's basic ideas. Put in your own words.	–If I understand, your situation is… –In other words, your decision is… –I think what you are trying to say is, but correct me if I'm wrong…	–Restating helps the group reach shared understanding during a discovery process so that everyone in the room is on the same page. –Restating it in different words can allow more people to understand. –If the facilitator wants to reach commitment, restating can help ensure all participants are clear about next steps. –Without it, participants may not be clear on what to do next.
Reflecting	To show you are listening and understanding. To let speaker know you understand how he/she feels.	Reflect the speaker's basic feelings. Put in your own words.	–I understand you feel that… –It sounds as if you were pretty disturbed about that… –That would also make me feel that way…	–Use when an individual(s) is experiencing conflict. –Use when you want to show that feelings or emotions are being captured in the facilitation process. –Without it, the facilitator runs the risk of participants closing off their emotions or true feelings.

[1]Built from a combination of the facilitator tool kits from U–Wisconsin, Langevin Learning Services and ACS facilitation experience.

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Clarifying	To encourage a participant to provide more information. To help clarify what you have heard.	Ask the speaker for more detailed information.	–Can you give a little more detail about… –Can you tell me more? –When does that usually happen?	–Use in any situation that someone brings up information that you don't know about. –Use when a group is newly organized to get everyone up to speed on events and activities. –Use when an individual is describing an experience and the facilitator must guide them to a conclusion. –Use when the group starts using jargon. This can be anything sector or issue–specific, and any topic that is technical. –Without clarity, the conversation runs the risk of participants disengaging.
Summarizing	To pull important ideas, fact, etc. together. To establish a basis for further discussion.	Restate, reflect and summarize major ideas, feelings and next steps.	–These seem to be the key ideas you expressed… –If I understand you, you feel this way about this situation. –Through this conversation, we've decided we will do XXX.	–When decisions are made. –Working through any process and come to stopping point. –Without it, nothing may happen between meetings.
Non–verbal	Gauge how your audience feels based on non-verbal communication.	Observe the speaker's mannerisms, gestures, facial cues, etc.	Positive cues: Eye contact, note taking, facial expression, and sitting up and forward. Harmful cues: chewing gum, checking email, crossing arms.	–90% of our communication is non-verbal. –Without understanding non-verbal cues, the facilitator may misread his/her audience, miss confusion or discontent of participants, or guide the group in the wrong direction.