



## ACTIVE LISTENING

### A NUTRITION IN-SERVICE FOR STAFF

“Learning is likely to be more effective if it grows out of what interests the learner, rather than what interests the teacher.”

~ Charles Silberman



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## A lesson on exploring the benefits of Active Listening.

- Who:** Participants: WIC Staff, range of 2-15 participants with a varying degree of maternal, infant and child nutrition knowledge and WIC experience.  
Leader: WIC RD/Nutritionist
- Why:** WIC staff are eager to help clients but sometimes the energy used helping takes away from the clients energy to take action. When truly listening, using active listening, clients are motivated to make positive behavior changes.
- When:** A monthly in-service that is designed to be 30 to 60 minutes - depending on the discussion and the number of staff attending.
- Where:** The session was designed for a WIC classroom, meeting room or large office depending on the size of the group.
- What:** By the end of this session staff will have:
- Defined Active Listening.
  - Identified the benefits of Active Listening.
  - Explored Active Listening techniques.
  - Practiced Active Listening.
- Materials Needed:** Copy and cut out “Active Listening Techniques” cards (attached) (Part 1)  
Ensure adequate meeting space for Part 1  
Copies of:
- Active Listening Techniques (attached) (Part 1)
  - Active Listening In-service *Participant Copy*
  - Active Listening In-service *Feedback Form*

**Background** For further review and consult:  
**Reading for** Center for Creative Leadership and Michael Hoppe, 2006, *Active*  
**Leaders:** *Listening: Improve Your Ability to Listen and Lead*, Booklet, CCL  
Publications, Greensboro, NC.

**How:**

- Schedule in-service.
- Review background information.
- Review in-service *Leader Copy* (*italicized print indicates leader speaking*).
- Prepare materials needed.
- Have fun!

**Introduction / Warm-Up****3 minutes**

*Welcome! I will be the leader for this month's nutrition training. I encourage all of you to participate. Together we can explore our topic and discover strategies to support our WIC clients.*

*By the end of this session you will have:*

- *Defined Active Listening.*
- *Explored Active Listening techniques.*
- *Identified the benefits of Active Listening.*
- *Practiced Active Listening.*

*Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. Unfortunately, many of us are not as good at listening as we think we are.*

*How much do you think you remember of what you hear?*

- *25 - 50%*
- *50 - 75%*
- *75 - 95%*

*Depending on the study being quoted, we remember only 25 - 50% of what we hear!*

*When people talk to each other, they often don't listen attentively. They are often distracted, half listening, half thinking about something else. When in a teaching setting the "teacher" is often busy formulating a response to what is being said. They assume what they will hear from their learner has been said many times before, so rather than paying attention; they focus on how they can respond.*

*Has anyone ever found they are guilty of this?*

**Part 1****10 minutes****Using Active Listening Technique cards**

*\*For groups smaller than ten, give some participants more than one technique card.*

*\*For groups larger than ten, make two copies of techniques cards and divide into two groups (four rows).*

*Please line up your chairs in two rows facing each other. I am handing out "Active Listening Technique" cards.*

*Hand out one (or more) "Active Listening Technique" cards to each participant.*

*When I say “go,” share the information on your card with the person sitting across from you. Share whether it is a technique you currently use. If not, how might you use this technique during a WIC visit? You will share with each other then after 2 minutes, one side will rotate and you will begin the process again with a new partner. You may begin.*

After 2 minutes, call time and ask one row to rotate. Continue until all participants have partnered with everyone in the opposite row.

*Who would like to share what they discovered from this activity?*

Provide all participants a copy of “Active Listening Techniques.”

**Part 2****3 minutes****Defining Active Listening**

*Listen to this definition of Active Listening.*

*Active Listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. Active Listening is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses the attention on the speaker. The listener must take care to attend to the speaker fully, and then repeats, in the listener’s own words, what he or she thinks the speaker has said. The listener does not have to agree with the speaker; he or she must simply state what they think the speaker said.*

Let’s review some of the benefits of Active Listening.

*Active Listening has several benefits.*

- *It forces people to listen attentively to others.*
- *It avoids misunderstandings, as people have to confirm that they do really understand what another person has said.*
- *It tends to open people up, to say more.*

*How do you think Active Listening would be beneficial when working with WIC clients?*

**Part 3****20 minutes****Actively Listening**

*Please break up into pairs. Decide who will be the listener and who will be the speaker. The listener's job is to practice Active Listening. Use only the techniques listed. Do not provide new information. It is not your job to solve the problem, just to understand it.*

*The speaker's job is to talk about a habit, behavior, dilemma or situation that you are thinking about changing.*

*You have five minutes. Begin.*

Call time after five minutes.

*Partners take two minutes to share your experience.*

*Speaker: how did this process help you through your problem?*

*How did it feel different than someone giving you information to "fix" the problem?*

*Listener: how did this process feel?*

*We will hear some of your observations*

Call the group back after two minutes.

Hear some of the pair's observations.

*Switch roles and repeat activity.*

**Closing****1 minute**

*Thanks for participating today. We heard some great discussion and ideas that will help us to better serve our WIC clients.*

*Please fill out a Feedback Form – your input is greatly appreciated.*

Collect Feedback Forms.

Make any notes you have as a leader and write down how long the training module took.

Review participants' Feedback Forms.

Document this training.



## Active Listening Techniques Cards

(Copy and cut out for Part 2)

<p><b>Eye Contact:</b> Full eye contact. Resisting eyes on the computer.</p>	<p><b>Facial Expressions:</b> Non-verbal "I'm listening" cues such as nodding.</p>
<p><b>Silence:</b> Allowing time for speaker to fully explore and state their message.</p>	<p><b>Body Language:</b> Ensure your posture is open and inviting.</p>
<p><b>Pay Attention:</b> Put aside distracting thoughts. Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.</p>	<p><b>Paraphrasing:</b> Repeating a message, but usually with fewer words.  What is the speaker's basic "thinking" message? What is the speaker's basic "feeling" message?</p>
<p><b>Clarifying:</b> Process of bringing vague material into sharper focus.  "Let me see if I got it all..."</p>	<p><b>Perception check:</b> Request for verification of your perceptions.  "Let me see if I've got it straight..."</p>
<p><b>Summarizing:</b> Pulling together and organizing the major aspects of the dialogue.  "The major points of what you are saying..."</p>	<p><b>Empathy:</b> Reflection of content and feelings.  "You feel (state feeling) because (state content)..."</p>



# Active Listening Techniques

## Non – Verbal Techniques

- **Eye Contact:** Full eye contact. Resisting eyes on the computer.
- **Facial Expressions:** “I’m listening” cues such as nodding.
- **Silence:** Allowing time for speaker to fully explore and state their message.
- **Body Language:** Ensure posture is open and inviting.
- **Pay Attention:** Put aside distracting thoughts. Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.

## Verbal Techniques

- **Paraphrasing:** Repeating a message, but usually with fewer words.  
What is the speaker’s basic “thinking” message?  
What is the speaker’s basic “feeling” message?
- **Clarifying:** Process of bringing vague material into sharper focus.  
“Let me see if I got it all.”
- **Perception check:** Request for verification of your perceptions.  
“Let me see if I’ve got it straight...”
- **Summarizing:** Pulling together and organizing the major aspects of the dialogue.  
“The major points of what you are saying...”
- **Empathy:** Reflection of content and feelings.  
“You feel (state feeling) because (state content)...”



## A lesson on exploring the benefits of Active Listening.

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this session you will have:

- Defined Active Listening.
- Explored Active Listening techniques.
- Identified the benefits of Active Listening.
- Practiced Active Listening.

How much do you think you remember of what you hear?

- 25 - 50%
- 50 – 75%
- 75 – 95%

When people talk to each other, they often don't listen attentively. They are often distracted, half listening, half thinking about something else. When in a teaching setting the "teacher" is often busy formulating a response to what is being said. They assume what they will hear from their learner has been said many times before, so rather than paying attention; they focus on how they can respond.

### Part 1

#### Using Active Listening Techniques

"Active Listening Technique" cards

Share the information on your card with the person sitting across from you. Share whether it is a technique you currently use. If not, how might you use this technique during a WIC visit?

After two minutes, one side will rotate and you will begin the process again with a new partner.

What did you discover from this activity?

### Part 2

#### Defining Active Listening

Listen to the following definition of Active Listening.

Active Listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that

improves mutual understanding. Active Listening is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses the attention on the speaker. The listener must take care to attend to the speaker fully, and then repeats, in the listener's own words, what he or she thinks the speaker has said. The listener does not have to agree with the speaker--he or she must simply state what they think the speaker said.

Let's review some of the benefits of Active Listening.

Active Listening has several benefits.

- It forces people to listen attentively to others.
- It avoids misunderstandings, as people have to confirm that they do really understand what another person has said.
- It tends to open people up, to say more.

How do you think Active Listening would be beneficial when working with WIC clients?

### **Part 3**

#### **Actively Listening**

Please pair up with someone. Decide on a speaker and a listener.

Speaker: share a problem or issue you are currently facing.

Listener: use Active Listening techniques. Use your sheet on "Active Listening Techniques" as a reference.

You have five minutes.

Partners take 2 minutes to share your experience.

Speaker: how did this process help you through your problem?

How did it feel different than someone giving you information to "fix" the problem?

Listener: how did this process feel?

Switch roles and repeat activity.

#### **Closing**

Thanks for participating today.

Please fill out a Feedback Form - your input is greatly appreciated.



