



ACTIVE LISTENING GUIDELINES AND FAIR FIGHTING

Give the speaker time and space
for rest after talking

Allow speaker to get it all out!

Express appreciation for the sharing
to build trust and encourage dialogue

Acknowledge them for getting it all out.

Check if you have understood by:

Restating

Key points to affirm your understanding
& build dialogue

“Did I hear you say..... Point
1,2,etc..”

Summarize

key points to affirm your understanding
& build dialogue

“What I heard you saying is.....”

Ask (non-threatening) questions
to build understanding

“Clarify for me , does that mean.....”

Continue dialogue:

Reflect on your experience

to demonstrate your interest (feedback)

“This will cause....etc.” “Then we will have
toetc.”

Interpret

after you feel you have grasped content

“My understanding is that ..”

Acknowledge the process

“I am glad you have shared this....”

Apply what you have learned
to the new situation

If you now have resolution and
understanding make an agreement of that
resolution or understanding.

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YOUR GOALS

1. Your goal is to be other-directed, rather than to project one's own feelings and ideas onto the other.
2. Your goal is to be non-defensive, rather than to protect the self. When the self is being protected, it is difficult to focus on another person.
3. Your goal is to imagine the roles, perspectives, or experiences of the other, rather than assuming they are the same as one's own.
4. Your goal is to listen as a receiver, not as a critic, and desire to understand the other person rather than to achieve either agreement from or change in that person.

Skills Associated with Empathy

SKILLS

EXPLANATION

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Attending, acknowledging | 1. Providing verbal or non-verbal awareness of the other, ie, eye contact |
| 2. Restating, paraphrasing | 2. Responding to person's basic verbal message |
| 3. Reflecting | 3. Reflecting feelings, experiences, or content that has been heard or perceived through cues |
| 4. Interpreting | 4. Offering a tentative interpretation about the other's feelings, desires, or meanings |
| 5. Summarizing, synthesizing | 5. Bringing together in some way feelings and experiences; providing a focus |
| 6. Probing | 6. Questioning in a supportive way that requests more information or that attempts to clear up confusions |
| 7. Giving feedback | 7. Sharing perceptions of the other's ideas or feelings; disclosing relevant personal information |

8. Supporting

8. Showing warmth and caring in one's own individual way

9. Checking perceptions

9. Finding out if interpretations and perceptions are valid and accurate

10. Being quiet

10. Giving the other time to think as well as to talk

LISTENING SKILLS

1. Communicating that we are listening:

a. Non-verbal attending: eye contact
body language
use of silence

verbal attending: minimal encouragers

b. The art of questions

Open questions: how? what? could? would?

Closed questions: is? are? do? did?

Why questions: sometimes open, sometimes closed

c. Focus--be aware that the conversation may take on a variety of focuses:

speaker focus
other(s) focus

topic focus
listener focus

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d. Reflections:

- reinforce and support the speaker
- clarify the meaning of communications
- reflect factual content
- reflect feeling content
- under-reflected vs. distorted reflections
- leave reflections tentative

e. Summary:

- recapitulation for easier remembering, better understanding, showing relationship of main points:
- beginning discussion (remembering where we left off)
- summarizing in mid-discussion, drawing together main points, ending a discussion, a sense of what happened

2. Summary of effective self-expression

a. Sharing information--the basis for expression:

Information:

- from other sources
- from our experiences
- based on our beliefs
- based on our feelings
- based on our wants

b. Using first-person pronoun--making "I" statements

c. Factual self-expression vs. feeling self-expression

d. Keeping the focus and avoiding "topic jumps"

e. Encouraging others to see themselves with clarity--
confrontation

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- f. Giving directions--achieving clarity
- g. Summarizing--its uses in self-expression
- h. Structuring purposeful interaction

Fair Fighting: Ground rules

Remain calm. Try not to overreact to difficult situations. By remaining calm it will be more likely that others will consider your viewpoint.

Express feelings in words, not actions. Telling someone directly and honestly how you feel can be a very powerful form of communication. If you start to feel so angry or upset that you feel you may lose control, take a "time out" and do something to help yourself feel steadier - take a walk, do some deep breathing, pet the cat, play with the dog, do the dishes - whatever works for you.

Be specific about what is bothering you. Vague complaints are hard to work on.

Deal with only one issue at a time. Don't introduce other topics until each is fully discussed. This avoids the "kitchen sink" effect where people throw in all their complaints while not allowing anything to be resolved.

No "hitting below the belt." Attacking areas of personal sensitivity creates an atmosphere of distrust, anger, and vulnerability.

Avoid accusations. Accusations will cause others to defend themselves. Instead, talk about how someone's actions made you feel.

Don't generalize. Avoid words like "never" or "always." Such generalizations are usually inaccurate and will heighten tensions.

Avoid "make believe." Exaggerating or inventing a complaint - or your feelings about it - will prevent the real issues from surfacing. Stick with the facts and your honest feelings.

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Don't stockpile. Storing up lots of grievances and hurt feelings over time is counterproductive. It's almost impossible to deal with numerous old problems for which interpretations may differ. Try to deal with problems as they arise.

Avoid clamming up. When one person becomes silent and stops responding to the other, frustration and anger can result. Positive results can only be attained with two-way communication.

Establish common ground rules. You may even want to ask your partner-in-conflict to read and discuss this brochure with you. When parties accept positive common ground rules for managing a conflict, resolution becomes much more likely.

1. **Take Responsibility.** It may take two to tangle, but it only takes **one** to end a conflict. Even if your partner doesn't agree to fight fair, you can make a commitment to never intentionally harm your partner's feelings. Commit to using the rules below. Then, if despite your best efforts, you find the fight getting out of control, walk away, using the suggestions in rule #4.
2. **Don't escalate.** When someone hurts us, it's human nature to want to hurt them back. But this starts an endless cycle of escalation as each person tries to hurt the other because they were hurt. The most important commitment you can make to fair fighting is to avoid escalating when your feelings are hurt. If either party continues to speak or act hurtfully, choose to walk away — don't lash out.
3. **Use "I" speech.** When we use "you" speech — such as "You do this" or "You do that" — the other person naturally feels accused and goes on the defensive. This usually leads to escalation. Instead talk about your own feelings: "I feel hurt when you talk that way to me." This avoids defensiveness because it's hard to argue with your self-report of how you feel. It avoids mistakes of understanding, too. There's a good chance that you *won't* understand your partner's feelings in the midst of a heated argument. If you try to tell your partner what he or she feels, means, or is doing, pretty soon your argument will be side-tracked into who is right, rather than talking about the real issue. But you will always be an expert on how you feel. So stick with your own feelings.
4. **Learn when to walk away — productively.** If despite your best efforts hurtful speech or actions continue by either party, call a time out. There are three elements to a successful time out. First, use "I" speech to take responsibility. Say something like: "I'm afraid of losing control." Second, tell your partner what you are going to do: "I'm going to take a walk to clear my head." Finally, set a time limit: "I'll be back in 15 minutes and we can talk about this then." Using these three steps — especially setting a time limit — will keep your partner from feeling abandoned or out of control. You are making a commitment to talking about the issue — so your partner won't feel you are avoiding the conversation. But you are clearly saying that you need a brief break. If you still don't feel safe to continue the discussion after your break, make sure you tell your partner — and set a new time limit.
5. **Avoid — and defend against — hurtful speech.** This includes name calling, swearing, hurtful sarcasm, raising the voice, and other forms of verbal hostility or intimidation. When either party says something hurtful, agree with your partner to use a key phrase that indicates the partner has hurt your feelings, such as "That's below the belt!" If your partner continues despite your warning, it may be time to walk away.

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6. **Stay calm.** Try not to overreact. Especially avoid exaggerating. That way your partner is more likely to consider your viewpoint.
7. **Use words, not actions.** When feelings are running high, even innocent actions can be misinterpreted. Stick with using "I" speech to explain your feelings, rather than gesturing, menacing, or touching/hitting.
8. **Be as specific as possible — with examples.** Don't make vague complaints. Try to give concrete examples — who, what, when, and where — of what you object to.
9. **Argue about only one issue at a time.** Don't start new topics until the first one is fully discussed. Too many couples do what's called "kitchen sinking": They store up a number of hurts and bring them up all in one grand, confusing fight. If you find yourself saying, "And another thing...", you're probably "kitchen sinking."
10. **Don't generalize.** Avoid words like "never" or "always." Generalizations are usually inaccurate. They will only make things more tense. Stick with specific examples.
11. **Avoid "make believe."** Exaggerating or inventing a complaint — even to make an innocent example — just stops you from talking about the real issue. Stick with the facts and your honest feelings.
12. **Don't wait.** Try to deal with problems as they arise — before hurt feelings have a chance to grow.
13. **Don't clam up.** When one person becomes silent and stops responding to the other, frustration and anger can build. Positive results can only be attained with two-way communication.

Agree to ground rules. The rules above are just suggestions — although they have worked for many couples I've counseled. But they'll only be maximally effective if you and your partner agree to them. Consider printing out this page and discussing these rules with your partner. You may find that he or she may disagree with some, but want to add others. When you *do* agree to common ground rules, resolving your conflicts will be much more likely.

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