HANDOUT: CORE PRINCIPLES OF ACTIVE LISTENING

Below are four core principles of active listening.

1. Physical Attention
   • Face the person who is talking.
   • Notice the speaker’s body language; does it match what he/she is saying?
   • Can you match the speaker’s body language?
   • Try not to do anything else while you are listening.

2. Paraphrasing
   • Show you are listening and understanding what is being said.
   • Check the meaning and your interpretation.
   • Restate basic ideas and facts.
   • Check to make sure your understanding is accurate by saying:
     “It sounds like what you mean is… Is that so?”
     “So what happened was… Is that correct?”

3. Reflecting
   • Show that you understand how the person feels.
   • Help the person evaluate his or her feelings after hearing them expressed by someone else.
   • Reflect the speaker’s feelings by saying:
     “Are you saying that you’re angry/disappointed/glad, because…?”
     “It sounds like you feel…”

4. Clarifying
   • Help clarify what is said.
   • Get more information.
   • Help the speaker see other points of view.
   • Use a tone of voice that conveys interest.
   • Ask open-ended questions, as opposed to yes/no questions, to elicit more information.

5. Encouraging
   • Show interest by saying
     “Can you tell me more about that?”
     “Really?”
     “Is that so?”