

Reflect, Correct, Respond

What is active listening?

It's when we are tuned into what the other person is saying and we are focused on understanding what they're saying, how they're feeling, and where they're coming from.

Why is active listening important?

It's easy to listen to another person just enough to form our response because we want and need to be heard, and they do the same thing to us. But what happens is in that process there's a lot of talking but not much actual listening or communicating. When we take the time to actively listen, the other person feels seen and heard and they are more likely to give us the time and space to be seen and heard too. This leads to real communication and understanding.

Reflect

While the person is talking, pay attention to their face and body language for cues to their emotions. Listen to what they are saying and see if you can pick up on the meaning in their story. When they are done talking, or when you feel like you have a pretty good sense of what they have told you, reflect back to them what you have observed. **Here's an example:**

"Please let me know if I've got this wrong, but it seems like you are really frustrated that this cycle didn't work and you're worried about the ongoing cost of fertility treatments."

We're not passing judgement or giving our thoughts or feelings, we're only asking if we have correctly understood what they're saying and where they're coming from.

Correct

This is an opportunity for the other person to let us know if we're on the right track. Since the point is to better understand, there's nothing wrong with getting it wrong... As long as we give them the space to help us improve our understanding. If they have had to clarify again or if they have continued to share more of their side of the story, it can be helpful for us to reflect again to make sure we are on the same page. It might feel like they are doing all the talking, and that's okay because we will get our turn.

Respond

It's now our turn to share our side of the story. It's helpful to attention to how we feel and what we want them to take away from our story. We might find that what we want to say now is different from what we thought we wanted to say at the start of the conversation, and that's okay! Our response has been affected by our understanding of the other person's point of view and what matters to them. While we're Responding, the other person takes the Reflect position, and the process repeats: we will have a chance to Correct, and continue if we need to, then they will get to Respond. **The end goal is for everyone to feel seen, heard, and understood.**

