

Active listening - Empathy

EXPLANATION:

Empathy's greatest secret is active listening! The purpose of active listening is to encourage listeners to focus and attend to the talker – demonstrating that they are truly interested in their perspective. This activity will test how well students listen to a story creating awareness of the importance of active and empathetic listening.

YEAR LEVELS: Years 7–10

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group listening activities

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 30–40 mins approx.

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Health and Physical Education: Sequence of content F-10

Strand: Personal, social and community health

Identities –

- Evaluate factors that shape identities and critically analyse how individuals impact the identities of others.

Strand: Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing

Understanding emotions –

- Analyse factors that influence emotions, and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity

Interacting with others –

- Investigate the benefits of relationships and examine their impact on their own and others' health and wellbeing
- Investigate how empathy and ethical decision making contribute to respectful relationships.

See also Personal and Social Capability learning continuum sub elements:

- Appreciate diverse perspectives
- Develop reflective practice
- Become confident, resilient and adaptable
- Understand relationships.



SCOPE OF TASK:

1. Share with students the importance of empathy and active listening:

Studies show that when people have empathy they exhibit:

- More classroom engagement
- Better communication skills and stronger, positive relationships
- Less bullying

About Active Listening: Listening is an essential skill and has a major impact on social effectiveness, and on the quality of relationships with others. Empathic listening is a structured listening technique concentrating on what is being conveyed, both intellectually and emotionally. When engaging in active listening it is essential to listen to understand; listen to learn, listen to become informed and listen for enjoyment. To practise "active listening" one must make a conscious effort to hear the words that another person is speaking and also listen to the message being communicated.

2. Play for students the following short excerpt from 'The Big Bang Theory Active Listening' video:



Ask students what was happening in the video?

- Were the actors hearing each other? How do you know?
- Were the actors listening to each other? How do you know?
- Do you think they were actively listening to each other? Why/why not?

3. Inform the students that they are engaging in a listening activity to see how well they listen. Inform them it is **not a test** but an activity for raising awareness about how well we actively listen and how to actively listen! Read the students the following story and tell them that you are going to ask questions at the end of the story:

Last Monday on the Australia day holiday I went to the Botanical gardens with my mother, father, older sister, younger brother and cousin. When we arrived, it was raining but it stopped after about 15 mins – it was really just a summer storm. There were no picnic tables, so it was lucky we had bought our large red picnic rug to sit on. We had packed a lovely picnic of chicken sandwiches, sausage rolls, strawberries and pavlova. My Dad and sister drank coffee, I had a soft drink, my brother had a juice and Mum wasn't thirsty. After eating Mum sat in the sun and read a book, my Dad and brother played cricket and my cousin and sister, and I went for a walk along the river. It started to get dark around 6:30 so we got back into our van and went home. We had a great Australia Day.

Ask students to answer the following questions independently – to test their active listening:

1. What colour was the picnic blanket? (red)
 2. What day did my family go to the park? (Monday or Australia Day holiday)
 3. Is my brother older or younger? (younger)
 4. How many picnic tables were at the park? (none)
 5. How long did it rain? (15 minutes)
 6. What did we eat for dessert? (pavlova and strawberries)
 7. What did my brother drink at lunch? (juice)
 8. After we ate, what sport did my dad and brother play? (cricket)
 9. What were the savoury foods that we ate at the picnic? (chicken sandwiches and sausage rolls)
 10. What park did we go to? (Botanical gardens)
4. Go through the answers with the students and check who got the answers correct – did half the students get it correct or did very few people hear the details? How many people got 10/10 etc – students can put their hands up to indicate how well they listened.
5. In conclusion, ask the students to reflect on active listening:
- What was easy about attending and listening?
 - What was hard about attending and listening?
 - How can active listening be helpful in your communication?
 - Why could active listening support empathy?
 - Why is empathy important in life?

RESOURCES:

- Projector for watching video
- Pens and paper