

# Leadersheet

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## Active Listening

In our active world of communication, one cannot afford to exclude the art of listening. As a leader, you must listen to your constituents in order to be effective. You need to listen and correctly understand all messages from group members.

Active listening differs from hearing. Hearing is the act of perceiving audible sounds with the ear and is a passive act. Listening, on the other hand, is the active pursuit of understanding what the other person is saying and feeling.

In active listening, the receiver tries to understand what the sender is feeling and what the message means. The listener puts his/her understanding into his/her own words and feeds it back to the sender for verification. It is important to feed back only what the listener feels the sender's message meant, nothing more, and nothing less. This creates an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding in which the sender can explore the problem and determine a solution.

To listen actively and to understand is not a passive or simple activity. The following are important characteristics of a "good listener."

### **Be There**

Be present in heart, mind and spirit with the person. You need to hear what he/she has to say. If you don't have the time, or don't want to listen, wait until you do.

### **Accept**

Accept the person as she/he is without judgment, reservation, or putting the person in a mental box or category, even though she/he may be very different from you.

### **Trust**

Trust the person's ability to handle his/her own feelings, work through them, and find solutions to his/her own problems.

### **Accept**

Accept the person's feelings, whatever they may be or however they may differ from your feelings or from what you think a person "should" feel. Don't be afraid that just because the feeling is expressed that the person will always feel that way. Remember that feelings change.

### **Listen**

Don't plan what you are going to say. Don't think of how you can interrupt. Don't think of how to solve the problem, how to admonish, how to console, what the person "should" do. DON'T THINK TO STRUGGLE OR REACT...LISTEN!

### **Keep Out Of It**

Keep yourself removed. Keep objective. Don't intrude physically, verbally, mentally. Shut up. Listen. This is hard and not passive.

### **Stay With the Other Person**

Put yourself in the other's shoes, at his/her point of reference. Don't become that person, but understand what he/she is feeling, saying, thinking. Stay separate enough to be objective but involved enough to help.