

West London Teacher Education Collaboration

Mastery Level: Module Four

Title: Active Listening Skills

Module Four: Prompts for Active listening

Active listening is giving someone your unconditional attention. It raises self-esteem by demonstrating that what your student has to say is the most important thing to you at that moment. By switching off your phone/s, your student knows that they have your full attention and that one ear is not pricked up to deal with anything else that might crop up. This is not easy to do, especially if you are working in a busy setting where sometimes you are needed to troubleshoot or to manage a difficult situation, perhaps with parents. You might want to think about how you would manage this.

Here are some suggestions which can make a discussion become meaningful and responsive:

- give the student time to respond to any comments you might make – silence for a few moments can be OK
- ask questions for clarification – repeat your understanding of a point so that the student can correct if it is inaccurate. So you could say: ‘did you mean that ...?’ or ‘I understood that you said ...is that right?’
- use eye contact to show your interest and that you are paying attention
- try to avoid responding to a comment by telling the student what you did when that happened to you
- minimise distractions beforehand and try to ignore them if they crop up while you are talking
- be open-minded – try to imagine the situation from the student’s point of view
- try to avoid giving advice unless you are specifically asked for it – and even then you could turn it around by asking, ‘what else might you have done?’
- remember that you are encouraging the learner to be reflective so your role is not to be the expert but to encourage the learner to think about how they can develop their practice
- use open questions to extend discussion: concentrate on questions such as, ‘how did you go about this’ ‘what were the influences here?’, ‘what did that feel like?’, ‘tell me more ...’ ‘what have the challenges been in this?’
- encourage discussion through nodding, smiling, using expressions, saying things like ‘yes, carry on’ to encourage the learner.