

Active Listening

- **Make eye contact:** Making eye contact with the person who is speaking focus your attention, reduces the chance of distraction, and is encouraging to the speaker.
- **Exhibit affirmative nods and appropriate facial expressions:** The effective listener shows signs of being interested in what is said through nonverbal signs. Indicate through your body language that your mentee warrants your full attention.
- **Avoid distracting actions or gestures:** Do not look at other people, play with items, check phone, or shuffle papers. These activities make the speaker feel like you are not interested in what is being said.
- **Ask good questions:** Questioning helps ensure clarification of what your mentee is saying, facilitates understanding, and encourages the mentee by letting them know you are engaged.
- **Listen for both fact and feelings:** If feelings are ignored, the true meaning and intent of the message is often missed. Pay close attention to your mentee's nonverbal communication as well as their words.
- **Paraphrase:** Paraphrasing means restating what the individual has said in different words. This technique allows the mentor to verify that the message was received correctly.
- **Avoid interrupting the speaker:** Allow the mentee to complete his or her thought before responding, and do not mentally prepare your response while the other person is speaking.
- **Do not talk too much:** An active listener recognizes that it is impossible to talk and listen acutely at the same time. Keep your ratio of talking to listening down to about 20 percent talking and 80 percent listening.

"Ten minutes of our complete and focused attention is worth much more in terms of maintaining a relationship and supporting learning than 30 minutes with distractions."
-Wellman and Lipton