



Working as a lifeguard requires exceptional communication skills. To be an effective lifeguard, not only must you have great speaking skills but you also must be an *excellent listener*.

**Active listening** involves *listening first* and *acknowledging* what you hear - even if you don't agree with it - before expressing your experience or point of view. Being actively listened to helps a person feel important and deserving of help no matter how trivial the problem may appear.

### FOUR BASIC LISTENING SKILLS

#### 1. Reflecting (“Feeling”)

- Tell the speaker what you sense or perceive are their feelings
- Reflecting acknowledges and validates the speaker's feelings and lets the speaker know that their feelings are normal and understandable
- Don't be afraid to reflect negative feelings (i.e. anger, fear, hate)
- Avoid one-upmanship (i.e. “that's nothing compared to what I went through”)
- Examples of reflecting: “It sounds like that frightened you” or “You seem to be feeling angry towards that person.”



#### 2. Paraphrasing (“Repeating”)

- Periodically put the speaker's message into your own words and say it back to them
- Allows you to confirm that you understand what the speaker is saying
- Gives the speaker an opportunity to correct any misunderstanding
- Lets the speaker know that you are listening
- Example of paraphrasing: “May I interrupt for a moment? I just want to make sure I'm following you. When you first spoke you said...and then this happened, and then so-and-so did such-and-such, and you felt...and now you want...have I got it right?”

#### 3. Open Ended Questions (“Expanding”)

- Gives the speaker an opportunity to elaborate, in their own way, on key points
- Helps the listener explore the speaker's experience and perceptions
- Encourages the speaker to step back and look at the bigger picture
- Allows the listener to get the big picture in order to better assess the overall situation
- Examples of open questions: “What lead up to this? ...and then what happened?”

#### 4. Clarifying (“Meaning”)

- Request further information concerning the factual circumstances
- Clarify what the speaker means by the words or phrases used
- Helps to ensure that you understand the meaning of what the speaker is saying
- Attempts to avoid confusion or misunderstanding
- Example of clarifying: “When you say... what do you mean by that?”

## **BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION**

### **Advising**

- ▶ Being an advice giver or “I’m telling you...”

### **Sparring**

- ▶ Picking a fight or “pushing buttons”

### **Being Right**

- ▶ Avoid being defensive. It’s not who is right/wrong – seek understanding

### **Derailing**

- ▶ Obstructing progress or changing the subject

### **Placating**

- ▶ Pacifying, appeasing – “Calm down!!”

### **Comparing**

- ▶ “That’s not what you just said...”

### **Mind Reading**

- ▶ Jumping to conclusions or finishing a person’s sentence

### **Rehearsing**

- ▶ Rehearsing your response before the person has finished speaking

### **Filtering**



- ▶ Hearing what you WANT to hear

### **Dreaming**

- ▶ Disengaging from the speaker or discussion – stay focused.

*Deal with the problem, not the person.*

*Shift from the complaint to action to resolve the problem.*

 <b>ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISE 1</b>	 <b>ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISE 2</b>
<p><b>Real Life Peer Listening</b></p> <p>With a practice partner, take turns telling a difficult or complicated event from your lives.</p> <p>As you listen to your practice partner, sum up their experience and feelings in <u>brief</u> responses during the telling. Try to integrate each of the following active listening skills during the telling of their story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Reflecting (“Feeling”)</li><li>▶ Paraphrasing (“Repeating”)</li><li>▶ Open Ended Questions (“Expand”)</li><li>▶ Clarifying (“Meaning”)</li></ul>	<p><b>Lifeguard PR Scenarios</b></p> <p>While lifeguarding, a patron tells you that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. She can’t believe how <i>dirty</i> the change room is and that it’s <i>unacceptable</i> for it to be in such a state of disorder.</li><li>2. He is frustrated with the ‘slow’ swimmers in the ‘fast’ lane and that he is NOT enjoying his swim with so many people getting in his way.</li><li>3. She has ‘had it’ with the kids splashing around in the pool and getting her face wet and ruining her new hair do.</li></ol>

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