

# Yoga During Exam Time

## Active Listening Techniques

Active listening is defined as a skill that requires few actions: listening for the full meaning of a message, responding to emotions, and noticing nonverbal communications. (Carl Rogers & Richard Farson, 1957)

The purpose of active listening is to help you get your message across and also help others feel connected to you and positively influence your relationships, self-esteem, and career success. If you practice active listening consistently, the people around you will feel heard, understood, cared for and respected. (Nicolay Leonardo)

Active listening is all about empathy. The ability to sense another person's feelings and imagine what it's like to be in their position is key to be a good listener.

## Benefits of Active Listening

There are many benefits to active listening. As an active listener you can:

- **Get what you need addressed from others:** People feel more agreeable when they are feeling understood
- **Develop a greater sense of self:** Through the process of learning how to communicate well, you can develop a greater sense of self
- **Improve your self-esteem:** Naturally feel more confident as a successful communicator
- **Set healthy boundaries:** Helps you acknowledge yours and others needs and considers boundaries for both of you
- **Accept the good intentions of others:** When we become active listeners, we become grateful for other peoples good intentions (lending an ear)

### Basic Active Listening Techniques

- **Paraphrasing:** Seek to clarify that you understood correctly
- **Using non-verbal language:** Doesn't involve words, makes the speaker feel important (examples include 'mhmmm and ahhhh'), voice tone and volume, hand and head gestures (like nods), facial expressions and body positioning
- **Emotional labelling:** Noticing, acknowledging and naming emotions (i.e., 'You seem really upset right now' or 'Having to miss your trip must be super disappointing,' etc.) gives them confidence you understand the emotional content of the message
- **Using silence:** Give speakers space, uninterrupted time to speak and collect their thoughts, pause while listening and pause before responding
- **Redirection:** Pivot the conversation back to the original subject if the speaker goes off topic – helps reduce tensions
- **Validating:** Allow others to freely express their emotions (some examples include 'You have every right to feel angry' and 'It's okay to feel upset'); speakers feel understood and supported

Active listening is an important social skill that has value in a variety of settings. Practice this skill often and it will become easier for you. However, also consider various reasons as to why someone isn't listening.

### Why Someone isn't Listening

- Physical noise: External sounds like phones, devices, etc.,
- Physiological noise: Biological, such as illness
- Semantic noise: Jargon or grammar
- Psychological noise: Mental and emotional factors such as biases

### **The Listening Habit**

Reflective, mindful, active, non-judgmental listening can help another person feel valued and supported. How do you feel when you can talk freely without being judged?

Try this exercise with your teens:

- One person talks about something that is important to them for 2-3 minutes
- Another person listens to them
- Third person observes the interaction
- Change roles so each have the role of talker, listener and observer

Once the exercise is finished, give them the opportunity to discuss how it felt being in each of those roles. They can discuss in a small group and then possibly share with the bigger group.