

**WORKING WITH OTHERS**

Empowers others to contribute and deliver

**Active Listening**

Active listening skills are one of the keys skills in empowering others. When we feel fully heard, we are more able to be ourselves at work, and bring our best ideas, knowing they will be given good attention. Active listening is about listening fully to the other person, rather than just passively 'hearing' the message of the speaker, it might involve being alert to what is going on under the surface, being aware of body language and tone of voice, listening out for someone's intention and understanding of the topic at hand. It can also involve being able to listen to ideas you don't agree with and find the value in them. It means not just waiting for your 'turn' to speak. Active listening takes good intent and a lot of practice.

Do you see active listening as part of your job role? Many of us don't until it is brought to our attention, but it can be a real game-changer for successful management practice.

**ACTIVITY** 

- Have a go in a work conversation where you practise listening without interrupting and without trying to fix the problem or answer the question. (If you're finding it difficult to focus or concentrate, you could try taking a few notes or repeating the words mentally to help you stay focused.)



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### ACTIVITY

- Take the opportunity when you are next asked for advice – instead of giving an answer, try a follow-up question – ‘What do you think we should do?’ See what comes up. If they come up with a plan that is not the same as yours would be, listen carefully. Might it work? Can they have a go? Does it have to be your way? If not, explain your concerns in a way that shows you have fully heard their views and ideas.
- Take the opportunity to listen carefully and work through a colleague’s idea and encourage them to map out a plan for themselves. Monitor the outcome: did the task get done? Was your team member energised and engaged in a different way? Did it not make any difference? Would you do it again?

Relating differently is often as challenging for your team members as yourself. It’s so much simpler to get, and give, the answer.

However, if your purpose is to create the conditions for empowerment, where your colleagues can have an opinion, can share their ideas and can contribute in their own way – and still get the work done! – then this is one way to open the space to different ideas. It is an opportunity to broaden and strengthen the team’s capacity to respond to diverse ways of thinking in each other and introduce new ways of doing things from which everyone benefits.



Complete the Reflection sheet