

Effective Listening Technique: *E A R*

To truly understand another person requires more than being quiet and listening. One must suspend their own thoughts for a short time, demonstrate earnest attention on the speaker, hear the words, validate their meaning and understand the context of the message.

The following technique is useful to ensure you are engaged and focused as a listener.

Explore, as you listen to the speaker, by asking open-ended questions about the topic. Try to understand what the speaker is communicating and why it is important to him or her. Is a problem situation being described? Or, is the speaker telling you some facts, an amusing story, or reasons explaining a decision or action?

Questions such as:

“What happened? “How?” “What led you to this conclusion?” and “How do you feel about it?” are examples of exploratory questions.

Acknowledge what you heard the speaker say. This can happen in a variety of ways. You can:

Echo the words or statement you heard

Re-phrase the message in your own words

Reflect how you interpret the emotion behind their words and tone of voice or you can simply say you understand

Remember that the purpose of Acknowledging is to “verify” whether you understand. Expect the speaker to clarify or even correct what you have said.

Respond with what you think or feel, after the speaker has validated that you understand what they are saying. Your response can support, agree, dispute, or elaborate on the topic. What you express in your response is *your* message back to the speaker—and then they provide an *E A R*, with you.