



Be Present

LESSON

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME

Participants will listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions. Understand oral and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.

MATERIALS

Computer, projector, paper, handouts, writing utensils

AGE ADJUSTMENTS

This lesson is appropriate for all audiences.

Lesson Plan

Introducing the Lesson

- Ask participants what it means to be present during a conversation.
- Write down their thoughts onto a whiteboard or poster paper.

Experiencing the Lesson

- Hand out the worksheet to each participant along with a writing utensil in case they wish to take notes.
- Before you start to go over the work sheet, add any of the following to the whiteboard or poster paper if participants have not brought it up already.
 - Stay aware of what is happening in the moment
 - Mentally screen out distractions (turn off electronics)
 - Pay attention (focus on the speaker)
 - Give attention
 - Apply yourself (take notes)
- Go through the eight different listening skills on the worksheet with all participants.

Closing the Lesson

- Have participants mingle around and find a partner or trio to have a practice conversation with.
- Challenge them to use as many of the new skills as they can.

After the Lesson

- Remind participants in the future that these skills might not all feel easy right now. Just like any other new skill it takes time to get used to it, but with time and practice you will soon be a professional at active listening.



When completing the worksheet, participants' natural reaction might not be that they are happy about how they compare in every area. Remind them that this activity is about focusing on the positive side of self-awareness and be prepared to help them process and find a positive reaction to the questions on the worksheet.

Further Exploration



- Have participants think about some outside distractions that keep you from being present. Here are a few examples:
 - Phone
 - Technology
 - Stress
 - Emotions
 - To-Do list
 - Lots of things happening in the background
 - Multiple people talking to you
- Lead a discussion on ways that we can limit these outside distractions.
- Conclude by saying that although we can do a lot to limit these outside distractions, sometimes the distractions are things we can't control. So it is important to give ourselves grace when we aren't being our best listeners and just make sure we communicate that with the people around us.

Get Creative

- For a creative take on this lesson, have participants get into partners.
- Explain that each partner will have 60 seconds to tell their partner about the best day of their life. This "best day" can be made up or something that actually happened.
- After each partner has shared, set a 5-10 minute timer and have participants draw a visual representation of their partner's best day.
- This will test their active listening skills based on how well they could retain the story!
- For an added challenge, have all participants share what they drew and explain their partner's "best day" to the best of their ability.

Online

- Provide participants with an electronic version of the worksheet.
- Continue as directed.
- If small-group work is included at the end utilize breakout rooms.



Be Present

1. Face the speaker and maintain eye contact. Talking to someone while they scan the room, study a computer screen, or gaze out the window is like trying to hit a moving target. Are you giving the speaker you undivided attention?
2. Keep an open mind - Listen without judging the other person or mentally criticizing the things she tells you. Check that you understand what's being communicated to you. Ask questions. Remember that messages heard/seen more than once, in more than one setting are more likely to stick.
3. Invest in the Process- As the communication is happening, are you getting the message? What can you personally do differently ? What are you good at in communication? What can you improve on?
4. Situational Awareness - How are you responding to the communication? What emotions are you experiencing? What about the other person/people? Are you responding to the communication or to other factors like your previous relationship?
5. Navigate Your Assumptions- We often assume we've been clear. Have you checked? Are you understanding? Are you on the same page? Sometimes we assume that the communication is effective. Are you evaluating your listening techniques?
6. Ask questions only to ensure understanding.
7. Pay attention to what isn't said– the majority of direct communication is probably nonverbal cues. Even over the telephone, you can learn almost as much about a person from the tone and cadence of their voice than from anything they say. Are you giving the right nonverbal cues to the speaker that you are engaged in the conversation? Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.
8. Concentrate on what is being said, even if it bores you. If your thoughts start to wander, immediately force yourself to refocus. Allow your mind to create a mental model of the information being communicated. Whether a literal picture, or an arrangement of abstract concepts, your brain will do the necessary work if you stay focused, with senses fully alert. When listening for long stretches, concentrate on, and remember, key words and phrases.

Worksheet for: Be Present