



NAEMT Mental Health Resilience Officer Course

Active Listening

Active listening is a crucial element for interpersonal relations. It is the foundation for building mutual understanding and shared awareness. While there are many “takes” on active listening, the table below identifies four common elements, along with techniques and strategies to successfully employ those elements.

Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolve to be attentive<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Set aside other activities and distractions when possible○ If you are unable to focus and maintain attention due to intrusions, schedule a time to reconvene, and block that time from intrusions.• Make appropriate eye contact• Find the right space where distraction and intrusion will be minimized.• Avoid conversational narcissism and shift response.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It can be easy to slip into discussing how a topic affects you the listener – avoid this while listening and consider incorporating it into your response if appropriate.• Watch non-verbal cues that signal the emotions and intent of what is being discussed.
Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give the person uninterrupted time to speak when practical.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ While it is important to allow uninterrupted time, it is also important to make sure an individual has the time to express all the points they would like to make, and sometimes they may need help or prompting.○ If an individual becomes repetitive or the conversation becomes circuitous, consider prompting them to discuss another point they would like to make. Phrases such as, “I can see how important that is to you. What other things might help me understand what you are trying to say?” or “I want to make sure you have time to discuss everything you came to talk about, what other things would you like to tell me about today?”• Follow the individual’s lead and resist the temptation to try and finish their story or help them find the words.• Ask for clarification when something is not clear.• Paraphrase and check understanding at appropriate intervals.• Provide non-verbal cues that signal your understanding, or when appropriate, provide non-verbal cues that indicate you are having trouble following along.
Response or Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resist the urge to plan your response as the individual is talking.• Understand that a response does not always have to be a solution.• Reflect on shared meaning or interest on the topic.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss possible next steps and follow up.• Always make sure to thank an individual for taking the time to speak with you.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Time is one of the most valuable things people have. Thanking someone for taking the time to discuss concerns with you is important.• Make sure that responses are specific to the matter being discussed. Avoid the temptation to speak in generalities or platitudes.
Retention and Recall	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarize the points discussed, response, and next steps.• Verify that your recall is correct.• Ask for permission to take notes on key points you would like to take away from the conversation.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It is important to ask for permission when taking contemporaneous notes. It signals that you are actively listening.○ Individuals may request that you do not take notes for various reasons. Respect that request when possible.• Ask for permission before escalating any topics discussed.• Ask the individual if they would like to remain anonymous or if they would like to have their name brought up when discussing the topic in the future.• Be up front if there may be any barriers to confidentiality and allow individuals to excuse themselves if that makes them uncomfortable.