



Coaching, Evaluating and Delivering Constructive Feedback – Learning Series

Topic VII: Active Listening

Topic VII - Active Listening Scenarios Knowledge Check - Key

understand how he or she feels, and you understand the meaning and importance of their message. Poor listening skills can damage a coaching relationship and it can be difficult to reestablish trust.

In the “Active Listening” topic, a number of “Keys to Active Listening” were presented. This worksheet will provide a number of scenarios. For each scenario you are asked to identify the “Key to Active Listening” that is being demonstrated or could be used to improve the coaching moment. Please refer to the “Active Listening” topic message to refresh your memory.

1. **Active Listening Scenario:** Adrienne scheduled a meeting with Jasper to discuss his year-end review. During the first 20 minutes of the 30-minute meeting, Adrienne talks through the feedback she has for Jasper. She uses the last 10 minutes to explain Jasper’s rating to him. Adrienne leaves the meeting feeling as though she has communicated everything she needed to tell Jasper in a short meeting! Jasper leaves the meeting wondering what happened...

Question: Which “Key to Active Listening” could be used to improve this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. **Let the employee speak**

The correct answer is **b. Let the employee speak**. Adrienne may have crossed everything off of her agenda, but she didn’t even consider what Jasper may have had to say. She didn’t give him an opportunity to ask questions about the feedback he received or his rating. As a result, Jasper left the meeting feeling confused and unheard. Remember – even though you may be leading the meeting – it’s critical that you let your employee speak and make him or her feel heard.

- c. Suspend judgment
- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. Give feedback

2. **Active Listening Scenario:** During a coaching conversation, Ahmed and Sharon have the following exchange:

Sharon: *“I am not getting along with the new guy, Dan. I’m trying my best to work with him, but I feel like I have to prepare myself for awkward exchanges and tense interactions. You’re able to work with him. How would you handle the situation?”*

Ahmed: *“It’s great that you recognize that it’s a difficult working relationship, and I appreciate that you’ve brought the situation to my attention. My recommendation is to approach the situation differently. Try not to go into conversations with Dan expecting awkward exchanges and tense interactions. Put yourself in a neutral place before you approach Dan or when he approaches you. If that doesn’t work, consider having*

a direct conversation with Dan about the situation. If you feel uncomfortable doing so, I'd be happy to facilitate a conversation to make the working relationship more at ease."

Question: Which "Key to Active Listening" is being demonstrated in this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. Let the employee speak
- c. Suspend the judgment
- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. **Give feedback**

The correct answer is **e. Give feedback**. Ahmed listens to Sharon's concerns, and waits until she asks for feedback to provide his recommendations. He doesn't try to figure out why they don't get along and he doesn't judge her or Dan for their "awkward interactions". He presents one solution to the situation and suggests a back-up in case that doesn't work. Ahmed is demonstrating the principles of active listening – and good coaching.

3. **Active Listening Scenario:** In preparing for her weekly check-in with Ramma, Myra reserved a conference room so they'd be free from distractions during their conversation. She shows up with a notepad and pen, but leaves her phone in her office. When Ramma joins her, Myra outlines the purpose of the meeting. While Ramma speaks, Myra is attentive and takes a few quick notes. In closing the meeting, Myra restates Ramma's key points and summarizes their next steps.

Question: Which "Key to Active Listening" is being demonstrated in this coaching conversation?

- a. **Be present and focused**

The correct answer is **a. Be present and focused**. Myra is clearly present and focused in her meeting with Ramma. She's removed all distractions and potential for interruptions. She reminds them both of the purpose of the meeting, and she's clearly attending to what Ramma's saying by taking notes and summarizing their conversations. Be careful not to take too many notes. It could alarm your employee (as he or she wonders what you're documenting) and distract you from listening.

- b. Let the employee speak
- c. Suspend the judgment
- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. Give feedback

4. **Active Listening Scenario:** Zach scheduled a meeting with Amanda to discuss an error in a report he discovered. The report has already been published – and to the Commonwealth website for all to see. When Amanda arrives at the meeting, she says, "What did you do? How did this happen? We can't have errors like this going out in our reports!"

Question: Which "Key to Active Listening" could be used to improve this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. Let the employee speak
- c. **Suspend the judgment**

The correct answer is **c. Suspend the judgment**. Amanda enters the meeting with her judgments on display. She blames Zach instantly, instead of keeping an open mind about the situation. A more effective approach would have been to separate the person and the problem. Amanda should have kept the meeting focused on finding a solution to the erroneous published report. If the error is Zach's fault, Amanda should have a separate conversation about how to prevent such errors in the future.

- d. Identify the feelings behind the words
- e. Give feedback

5. **Active Listening Scenario:** Jeric is meeting with Kate to discuss her goals. Kate's face is drawn, her arms are crossed, and she's leaning away from Jeric. Jeric works down the list of goals, but all Kate responds with is one-word answers – sure, yeah, okay. Something is clearly wrong, and Jeric says, "Kate, I can tell something else is on your mind. Let's put your goals aside for now and talk about it." Kate drops her arms to her sides, and shares with Jeric that she's upset that she didn't receive the promotion she was hoping for.

Question: Which "Key to Active Listening" is being demonstrated in this coaching conversation?

- a. Be present and focused
- b. Let the employee speak
- c. Suspend the judgment
- d. **Identify the feelings behind the words**

The correct answer is **d. Identify the feelings behind the words**. Jeric looks beyond Kate's words to her reactions and body language to understand what she's feeling. She's clearly disengaged with Jeric and the goals conversation. By acknowledging Kate's feelings, Jeric gains her trust and gets her to open up about her disappointment.

- e. Give feedback