

5 WAYS TO SHOW YOU'RE REALLY LISTENING

PREPARE-ENRICH BLOG - APRIL 28, 2021

Are you even listening to me?!

Have you ever been on the receiving end of this question? It's not a great feeling. You might feel like you're justifiably getting called out or you might get a little indignant because you *were* listening! Whatever the case, something is missing when it comes to your active listening, which is foundational to good communication.

Here are five tips to make sure your partner feels heard:

1. **Avoid multitasking.**

Put down your phone, close the laptop, stop loading the dishwasher. Focus your full attention on your partner. You might be perfectly capable of listening intently while folding laundry, but if they're trying to tell you something important let them know you're ready to hear what they have to say by focusing solely on them.

2. **Be mindful of your body language.**

You might not be doing other tasks, but if you're sitting with your arms crossed defensively and looking off into the distance, you're not going to come across as very open to listening. Relax your body, look them in the eye, and make some kind physical contact. These cues let your partner know that you're there in the moment with them, physically and mentally.

3. **Let them speak.**

This seems somewhat obvious, but in the moment it's natural to want to interject with your own responses. Try to avoid interrupting until they give a cue that they're done sharing. This is especially important during conversations where emotions are running high, but it's a considerate habit to adopt for lighter exchanges as well.

4. **Restate what they've shared.**

One of the tenets of active listening, restating what your partner is conveying to you helps ensure that nothing is getting lost in translation. Instead of just parroting back what they say verbatim, focus on hearing and restating how you understand what they're saying. If you're slightly off mark – that's okay. This gives them the opportunity to provide clarification and you the chance to increase your understanding.

5. **Ask good questions.**

Be curious! Following up with questions to learn more about your partner's thoughts, feelings, and perspective not only shows that you were really listening, but also that what they're saying – and the person saying it – is important.

Bonus tip for the speaker: If you've got something that you really want your partner to *hear*, let them know. Give them a heads up by saying, "*Hey, do you have a second?*" or "*Can I talk to you about something important?*" Maybe they're in the middle of something or their mind is on other things, but by assertively letting them know you need them to listen, you're making it easier for them to pause what they're doing to pay attention – a win-win situation