



WINNING AGAINST VIOLENT ENVIRONMENTS PROGRAM

Cleveland Schools Center For Conflict Resolution
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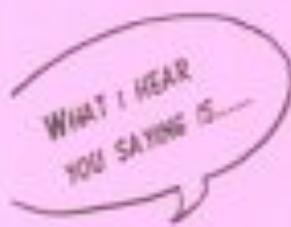
Verbal Active Listening Skills

Active listening skills are very important. These skills are used in each step of the Mediation Process. **Active Listening is hearing other people, understanding their messages, and letting them know that they are being listened to.** People give messages **non verbally, (without words--body language)** and **verbally, (with words)**. It is very important to listen with both your eyes and your ears.

- There are **5 verbal listening skills** that Mediators must use.

Skill 1---Acknowledging. The Mediator shakes his/her head or says, "Yes," "Uh Huh," or "Please go on," to let the speaker know that she/he is being listened to. This skill is called **Acknowledging.**

Skill 2---Paraphrasing. Mediators need to **repeat back what a speaker has said.** **Repeating back** the speaker's story lets the person know that the Mediators are really listening. **Repeating** the story also lets the speaker hear back what they have said. This is a chance to make sure that what they said is what they meant and that their story is clear and understood. This skill is called **Paraphrasing or Summarizing**



Skill 3--Reflecting. After repeating the speaker's story, the Mediator helps the speaker identify how she/he **feels** about the situation. The Mediator asks, "**How did that make you feel?**" or "**How did you feel about what happened?**" If the speaker says how she/he feels while telling the story, the Mediator should **repeat back to the speaker the feeling or feelings.**

For example: A Mediator would say,
"O.K. I hear that you are feeling hurt and angry, etc."

Feelings are very important. In order to solve conflicts people need to be able to get their feelings out and listened too.

This skill is **Reflecting.**



Skill 4--Questioning. Sometimes people have a difficult time telling their story and remembering all the details. If this happens, Mediators need to ask **questions.**

There are two main types of questions, Open-ended questions and Closed-ended questions.

Open-Ended Questions.

Open-ended questions are the best to use because they allow the people to explain their stories in more detail. This helps the parties and the Mediator understand the problem is.

Open-Ended Questions begin with the words:

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How



Closed-Ended Questions. These are questions that can be **answered with yes or no**. If a Mediator is having trouble getting a person to talk, she/he can ask some closed-ended questions. When the person feels more comfortable speaking, ask open-ended questions.

GOOD LISTENERS MAINLY ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS!

Skill 5---Crediting. After the Mediator listens to a speaker, she/he will say, "Is there anything else you want to add?" If there is not, the Mediator should **thank** the person for speaking and telling their side of the story. Mediators should also thank the other party for waiting his/her turn to speak. Thanking people for speaking and for waiting helps people feel good about being a part of the process. This skill is **Crediting**.



S stands for **Squarely**

- **Squarely Face** the speaker.
- When standing or sitting and talking to a person, never slouch.

O stands for **Open Stance**

- Mediators will put their arms down to their sides or fold their hands in front of them.
- Doing this shows you are paying attention and are not bored or uncaring.
- Never cross your arms in front of your chest.

L stands for **Lean Forward**

- When talking to a person, the Mediator will lean a little forward.
- The Mediator's attention is centered completely on the person speaking.

E stands for **Eye Contact**

- Eye Contact is the most important part of body language.
- If eye contact is not made, the person speaking might feel she/he is not being listened to, respected, or cared for.
- NOTE: In some cultures, eye contact is a form of disrespect. Mediators need to understand the cultural background of the people they are working with.

R stands for **Relax**

- Just Relax!!
- Relaxing puts everyone at ease.





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Non-Verbal Active Listening Skills

Non-verbal active listening is called **Body Language**. Body Language is the silent messages that people give with their bodies. This is done by the way a person looks as she/he speaks, sits, stands, and uses facial expressions and hand/arm movements. A **Mediator** shows positive body language by radiating **Soler Energy**. (SOLER is an acronym).

Soler Energy

- S---Squarely Face the Speaker
- O---Open Stance
- L---Lean Forward
- E---Eye Contact
- R---Relax

