

Activity 9: Listen To Me!

Many people think speaking is the most important communication skill for leaders. However, one spends more time listening than any other form of communication. Whether you are in a leadership position or not, listening is one of the most important communication skills you can learn. When you listen you not only know what you know, but you know what the other person knows.

OBJECTIVES:

For youth to:

- improve their listening skills.
- observe and evaluate others in a listening interaction.
- realize the importance of listening in getting along with others.
- discover the relationship between effective listening and team-building.
- practice helping others through listening.

LIFE SKILLS:

- Working with others.
- Improving listening and overall communication.

MATERIALS:

- Copies of LISTEN TO ME! Activity Sheets for each youth
- Paper
- Pens or pencils

TIME:

1 hour

SETTING:

Comfortable room with tables and chairs.

DO

- Pass out the LISTEN TO ME! Activity Sheets and allow participants to read before the activity begins. Discuss any skills the youth may have questions about.
- Separate into groups of three. Designate one person as the "Solution-Seeker," another as the "Listener" and the third person as the "Evaluator." (Everyone will have a chance to play each role once.)
- The Solution-Seeker will tell the Listener a problem (past or current) that he or she is facing. The Listener must listen with empathy using the guidelines stated on the LISTEN TO ME! Activity Sheet. The Evaluator will take notes of the interaction, specifically on the skills of the Listener.
- After each session is complete, the participants will switch places until each person has played all of the roles.
- After each person has played a role, the Evaluators for each discussion will explain their observations of the interaction and the Listener's empathic listening skills to the other members.

REFLECT

- As the Solution-Seeker, how did you feel after telling the Listener your problem?
- As the Listener, was it difficult to listen with empathy without contributing?
- As the Evaluator, were you able to become more aware of your own listening strengths and weaknesses?
- Overall, what did you learn about your listening skills?

APPLY

- How are listening skills important to leadership?
- Can you think of some examples of problems that occurred when leaders were not listening?
- How can you help others improve their listening skills?

LISTEN TO ME!

Good listening is an active skill. It involves:

- Observing (What one does)
- Hearing (What one says and how one says it)
- Feeling (How one is feeling)
- Sensing (What one has not said, but wishes to or means to say)

The following are some suggestions which may help you increase your readiness to be an active listener:

1. Have a purpose or reason for listening.
2. Ask questions.
3. Provide speaker with verbal and nonverbal feedback.
4. Be aware of your attitudes towards the speaker and attempt to listen objectively.
5. Wait before responding. Do not formulate your response while the speaker is delivering the message.
6. Listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
7. Listen for feelings as well as information.
8. Look for important themes.
9. Avoid imposing your values on the speaker. Listen in a non-judgmental way.
10. Overlook negative aspects of the speaker's delivery which might interfere with your understanding the message.

Continued on Next Page...





LISTEN TO ME!

- Show interest.
- Be understanding of the other person and use words such as "I see" or "I understand" to confirm your understanding.
- If there is a problem, listen for the cause and single it out.
- Help person associate problem with the cause.
- Encourage the speaker to develop ability and desire to solve his or her own problems.
- Learn to be silent.
- Restate what the speaker has said to let him or her know you are listening.
- End the conversation by repeating and confirming what has been discussed.
- Concentrate intently on the speaker.
- Practice reinforcing nonverbal behaviors (i.e. leaning forward, establishing and maintaining eye contact, etc).
- Be alert and attentive.
- Imagine yourself in this person's place.

Activity 10: Talking Terror

Leaders have to be able to communicate in a variety of different situations. Public speaking is not the only form of communication in which a leader should be competent. Communicating effectively in group discussions, conversations, and in formal meeting situations are often required and necessary when holding a leadership position.

OBJECTIVES:

For youth to:

- learn about the different situations in which leaders must communicate.
- discover personal levels of communication apprehension in different situations.
- brainstorm ways to improve personal communication skills.
- relate communication competence to leader effectiveness.

LIFE SKILLS:

- Communication.

MATERIALS:

- Copies of TALKING TERROR Activity Sheet for each youth
- Copies of TALKING TERROR Score Sheet for each youth
- Pens or pencils
- Flip chart or dry erase board
- Markers

TIME:

30 minutes

SETTING:

Comfortable room with tables and chairs.

Not everyone is an effective communicator in all situations. Communication apprehension is the fear of communicating in certain situations. There are some people who are superb public speakers but are intimidated speaking one on one. There are others who are comfortable speaking in relaxed group discussions but are unable to communicate in a formal setting such as a meeting or classroom. By identifying situations in which we are apprehensive about communicating, we are able to focus on improving those areas in order to increase our overall strength as a communicator.

DO

- Hand out TALKING TERROR Activity Sheet to participants.
- After youth have completed the questions, hand out the TALKING TERROR Score Sheet. Explain the scoring process to the participants and allow them to score their own test.
- After participants have scored themselves, go through each of the main communication categories (Small group, public speaking, one to one, and meetings) and brainstorm ways in which to improve that particular communication. Write strategies on the flip chart or dry erase board.

REFLECT

- In which situations were you the most apprehensive about communicating? Why?
- In which situations do think most people are most uncomfortable communicating?
- Who or what types of leaders especially/specifically need good communication skills in group discussions? During conversations? In meetings? When giving speeches?
- What is the relationship between communication apprehension (CA) and leadership? Are effective leaders low, moderate, or high in CA?
- Is flexibility in communication associated with low, moderate or high levels of CA? How does communication apprehension influence the acquisition and production of communication?

APPLY

- How can you improve your communication skills in group discussions? In meetings? In conversations? During speeches?
- What problems can a leader face if he or she is apprehensive in a situation?



TALKING TERROR

Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement by noting whether you:

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------|
| 5 | Strongly Disagree | 2 | Agree |
| 4 | Disagree | 1 | Strongly Agree |
| 3 | Are Undecided | | |

There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly to record your first impression. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer.

- ___ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
- ___ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussion.
- ___ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
- ___ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
- ___ 5. Engaging in group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
- ___ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
- ___ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
- ___ 8. Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
- ___ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called on to express an opinion at a meeting.
- ___ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
- ___ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
- ___ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
- ___ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
- ___ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
- ___ 15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
- ___ 16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
- ___ 17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
- ___ 18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
- ___ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- ___ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech.
- ___ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
- ___ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
- ___ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
- ___ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.

*Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 PRCA-24 taken from:
McCroskey, J.C. (1982). An introduction to rhetorical communication (4th Ed).
Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.*

TALKING TERROR

Score Sheet

The PRCA-24 allows you to compute an overall communication apprehension score and provides a summary of your apprehension in four specific communication situations: group, meeting, dyadic (one-on-one conversations), and public.

Group Score = Begin with 18, add scores for items 2, 4, and 6; then subtract scores for items 1, 3, and 5.

Your group score = _____

Meeting Score = Begin with 18, add scores for items 8, 9, and 12; then subtract scores for items 7, 10, and 11.

Your meeting score = _____

Dyadic Score = start with 18, add scores for items 14, 16, and 17; then subtract scores for items 13, 15, and 18.

Your dyadic score = _____

Public Scores = start with 18, add scores for items 19, 21, and 23; then subtract scores for items 20, 22, and 24.

Your public score = _____

Overall Communication Apprehension (CA) = Add your group, meeting, dyadic, and public scores.

Overall CA score = _____.

INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

Low CA	Overall score is less than 55. Low CAs talk a great deal; they even talk with people when they are not particularly motivated to talk.
High CA	Overall score is greater than 83. High CAs are more withdrawn in conversation and appear tense and shy.
Moderate CA	Overall score is between 55 and 83. Moderate CAs recognize that there are times to talk and times when they should not talk. Their level of participation in conversation varies.

*Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 PRCA-24 taken from:
McCroskey, J.C. (1982). An introduction to rhetorical communication (4th Ed).
Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.*

Activity 11: Podium Presence

Public speaking is the form of communication most often associated with leadership. Leaders use public speaking skills when running meetings, discussing issues, brainstorming topics, and many other areas. It is a very important skill that, when polished, is very marketable and can increase your effectiveness as a leader.

OBJECTIVES:

For youth to:

- practice speaking to a group from behind a podium.
- practice using hand gestures when speaking to a group.
- learn to control voice tempo and range.
- critique one another's speaking performance.

LIFE SKILLS:

- Listening skills.
- Communicating to groups.

MATERIALS:

- Podium (regular or table top)
- Newspapers
- Copies of PODIUM PRESENCE Activity Sheet for each youth
- Copies of PODIUM PRESENCE Information sheet for each youth
- Pens or pencils

TIME:

30 minutes - 1 hour (depending on number of participants)

SETTING:

Comfortable room with chairs and a podium set up at the front.

DO

- Explain to the youth that they will be selecting an article and reading a paragraph to the rest of the group. As each person reads his or her paragraph, other youth will look for behaviors that add to and detract from his or her speech and write them on the PODIUM PRESENCE Activity Sheet. Some examples of behaviors that enhance public speaking could be "straight posture," "smiles," or "pleasant voice tone" while behaviors that have a negative effect could be "poor posture/slouching," "speaking too quietly," and/or "little eye contact with the audience."
- Hand out newspapers and allow youth to select an article that interests them.
- Have youth take turns standing behind the podium and reading their article to the group. Have other youth make notes on their Activity Sheet.
- After all youth have read their article, lead a discussion about what helped and hindered their speech.
- Hand out the PODIUM PRESENCE Information Sheets and have youth one at a time take turns going to the podium and reading one of the tips aloud.

REFLECT

- Compare reading the article to giving a speech. How are they alike? How are they different?
- What are some of your speaking strengths? What are some of your weaknesses? How can you improve your weaknesses?
- How does one's ability as a public speaker affect his or her leadership effectiveness?

APPLY

- Think of examples of good leaders with poor speaking skills. Now list examples of poor leaders with excellent speaking skills. How do the two lists compare?
- List times when a leader's public speaking ability is crucial.