

Activity - Four¹⁴ Questions

Divide the amount of time to be allocated for this exercise in half - each person needs an opportunity to sit in both roles.

Divide that number by four: that is the amount of time that can be allocated to each of the four questions. Some questions may take longer or need more repetitions than others, but it is important to begin with a rough idea of the time limits.

The Listener begins by asking the Speaker the first question:

What are you MAD or ANGRY about?

This is an invitation for the Speaker to look deep inside to see and feel what's in their gut that's connected to feelings of ANGER and to express those feelings in words. It's not a speech, lecture, or conversation but a chance to become aware of the feelings and say them aloud.

As the Speaker confides, the Listener should stay focused on the Speaker's eyes, expressions, and words, listening much more with the heart than the head.

After the Speaker confides, the Listener only responds with:

"Thank you. What else are you MAD or ANGRY about?"

This pattern repeats until the Speaker indicates they've expressed everything they're MAD or ANGRY about [or until you've used about an eighth of the time you've agreed upon for this conversation], then the Listener says, "Thank you for sharing," and moves to the next question:

What are you SAD about?

Again, the Listener pays attention to the Speaker, then only responds with:

"Thank you. What else are you SAD about?"

This pattern repeats until the Speaker indicates they've said everything they're SAD about, then the Listener says, "Thank you for sharing," and moves to the next question:

What are you SCARED or WORRIED about?

Again, the Listener pays attention to the Speaker, then only responds with:

"Thank you. What else are you SCARED or WORRIED about?"

This pattern repeats until the Speaker indicates they've said everything they're SCARED or WORRIED about, then the Listener says, "Thank you for sharing," and moves to the next question:

What are you GLAD about?

Again, the Listener pays attention to the Speaker, then only responds with:

"Thank you. What else are you GLAD about?"

This pattern repeats until the Speaker indicates they've said everything they're GLAD about, then the Listener says, "Thank you for sharing."

Switch roles, repeating all four questions in the same manner as before.

Finally, show appreciation for both Sharing and Listening

The exercise ends with a sign of appreciation to your partner.

¹⁴ Adapted from PAIRS Foundation. (2019). Listening with empathy. Retrieved from http://participant.pairs.com/listening_with_empathy.php