

Active Listening

“Being heard is so close to love that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.” David Augsburger

The purpose of active listening is to really understand what the speaker is saying. It is not to teach, advise, correct or share your own story.

Begin with some basics:

1. Face the speaker and maintain eye contact - try not to be distracted by looking at other things or people in the room.
2. Listen to understand and reserve all judgement.
3. Listen to understand and don't be thinking about solutions.
4. Ask questions only to ensure understanding.
5. Try to keep questions open ended - can't be answered by yes or no.

Add some skills:

1. Reflect - when the speaker stops you can reflect what you heard (You have applied for several jobs and have not heard back).
2. Empathize - what might the speaker be feeling. (You must feel pretty discouraged with this slow pace).
3. Ask a clarifying question - (Out of the three jobs you have applied for which one would you most like to get?).
4. Ask feeling questions - (How are you feeling about continuing to apply?).
5. Summarize - When the topic has been explored let them know you heard by summarizing what they said (It really sounds to me like even though you are discouraged by the lack of response from these applications, you are not going to give up).

Keep in mind that it is seldom helpful to give advice unless they ask and it is not a time to jump in with your story of applying for jobs etc.

“I know you think you understand what you thought I said,
but I'm not sure you are aware
that what you heard is not what I meant.”