



Types of Active Listening

PARAPHRASING:

What it is:

Stating briefly, in your own words, what you understand a person to have said.

Paraphrasing focuses on the actual content of what the person said—not any potential underlying feelings or motivations.

Why you use it:

It shows you are interested in the person and are willing to try to understand them.

What it looks like:

“What I hear you saying is... is that correct?”

If they say no, ask them to clarify.

Example Sentence

Starters:

“What I hear you saying is...”

or “My understanding of what you said is...”

SUMMARIZING:

What it is:

Restating key information that has been shared to improve group understanding. Identify areas participants have in common, and note differences as well.

Why you use it:

Summarizing clarifies statements and keeps participants on the same page, and is particularly best after several participants have spoken.

It also helps a recorder capture any information they may have missed!

What it looks like:

“We have been discussing this question for a while. To recap, here are some of the common views I heard...

and also some areas where we disagree...

is there anything I missed?”

Example sentence starters:

“To recap, here is what I’ve heard so far...”

or “Let me confirm our understanding of the conversation so far...”

REFRAMING:

What it is:

A technique for diffusing loaded or angry statements. Reframing restates the individual’s comment in a neutral and calm way, by focusing on the key value or concern behind the sentiment.

Why you use it:

This helps diffuse any discomfort or potential conflict, and helps participants to hear the speaker’s underlying meaning without the emotions behind it or the language originally used.

Note: this should not be used for racist or derogatory statements, which should be addressed directly.

What it looks like:

This: “I hate the way that this group advocates for their view by trying to indoctrinate young people.”

Becomes: “It sounds like you have concerns about the tactics used by this group.”

Example sentence starters:

“It sounds like...”

or “If I understand you correctly...”