

Coaching skills: Active listening

Listening is one of the most important coaching skills.

Strong listening skills can help you to verbally acknowledge, clarify, challenge, and validate your client’s efforts. When you actively listen to what your client is saying, you are listening not only to their words but for the qualities underlying what they are saying. This can include listening for: strengths, beliefs, values, resources they are aware of or actively using, and the way they talk about themselves.



Active or focussed listening means that you, the coach, are:

- Paying attention to the client
- Listening carefully for underling meanings and connections
- Reflecting on what the client is saying, and intuiting what they might need
- Keeping your own judgments and self-talk in the background

Think about a time when you felt personally ‘listened to.’
What did that person do to make you feel that you were being heard?

Consider the following ways to reflect that you are listening to the person in front of you.
Try to use at least one each time you meet with a client:

- **Making eye contact**
- **Using positive body language** – facing the client, arms not crossed
- **Reflecting back** – “What I’m hearing you saying is...”
- **Reframing statements** – i.e. “What ways could we think about this challenge as an opportunity?”
- **Allowing silences** – These impart time to think and respond; Silences don’t always need to be filled right away
- **Minimizing distractions in the room** – silence cell phones

What other ways can you think of to show you are listening to a client?
