

LEARNING TO LISTEN

Model

Sean is a peer mediator in his school. He has discovered that one of a mediator's most important jobs is to listen. Listening carefully helps him clarify each person's wants and needs, which makes it easier to find a win-win solution. When he listens to others, he uses body language and conversation encouragers to make it easier for them to talk. He restates what they have said to make sure he understands them. He also asks questions when he needs to clarify what he has heard. Read Sean's conversation with Sally. Which listening skills does he use?

I'm so tired of the way Stephan is treating me. We've been friends forever, but sometimes you'd think I'm invisible.

Well, when we're alone, he acts like we're best friends. But when his other friends are around, I'm nobody.

Yes, but not just any people. Only, you know, COOL people. The popular kids in school.

This only happens around other people?

I see what you're saying. You think Stephan is ignoring you because he wants to be around the popular kids.

So you're angry with Stephan because you feel ignored. Tell me more.

Practice

Practice your listening skills by responding to the incomplete conversation below. On a sheet of paper, write your responses to Randy's remarks. Be careful not to change the subject or offer advice. Your job is to listen!

RANDY: I can't believe what Melody did. She's telling everyone I didn't do my share of our project.

YOU:

RANDY: Well, I heard that Melody said I didn't do my half of the research. But we agreed that she would do the research and I would make the poster.

YOU:

RANDY: I didn't actually hear it from her. I guess I should talk to Melody and get the facts straight.

YOU:

After you complete the conversation, exchange papers with another student in your class. Discuss the listening skills you used. Which skills are the most natural for you?



Communication Skills

Listening skills are:

- Use appropriate body language.
- Use conversation encouragers.
- Mirror the speaker's thoughts and feelings.
- Ask questions to clarify.

Apply/Assess

Put your listening skills to work in a peer mediation situation. Form groups of three. Then role-play a situation in which two people are having a conflict and the third is mediating. If you are playing the mediator, listen carefully to both sides. Use one or more of the listening skills every time you add to the conversation. After both people have told their sides of the story, summarize their statements to make sure you have understood correctly. Then change roles so that another person can play the mediator. Let each person act as the mediator once. Be prepared to perform your role-play for students in your class. Ask classmates to identify the listening skills.

Self-Check

- Did I use listening skills appropriately?
- Did I identify the listening skills used by others?

