

What makes a good listener?

We have developed a new workshop on active listening skills - as part of this we generated some working principles based on Nancy Kline's 'Time to think'.

Based on the Components of a Thinking Environment developed by Nancy Kline, 'Time to Think, listening to ignite the human mind'

- A good listener is **attentive** (*they listen carefully*). They communicate **genuine** (*real*) interest and respect. A good listener is not distracted by their phone/tablet/laptop!
- A good listener tries to clear their own mind of assumptions or prejudices about the other person.
- A good listener asks **incisive** (*to the real point*) questions, which look to remove limiting assumptions and boundaries in the speaker's own thinking.
- A good listener does not interrupt and is aware of how negative the impact of interruptions can be.
- A good listener is not afraid of silence. They are not afraid to give space for people to reflect. A minute of no one talking does not need to be embarrassing.
- A good listener really thinks about the expressions on their face. Their facial expressions encourage others to talk. A good listener **retains** (*maintains*) good eye contact, their eyes don't **wander** (*move around*). They do not **fidget** (*making lots of restless movements*).
- A good listener communicates ease, they communicate they have time for the other person and that there is no rush, or urgency.

- A good listener encourages. They communicate they are not in competition with the other person. This helps the speaker **open up** (*to be honest*).
 - A good listener is not afraid of emotion. Some situations might **incur** (*cause*) anger, fear, or sadness. A good listener allows this emotion to **flow** (*be expressed*) knowing that this can be helpful.
 - A good listener creates a confidential space and makes it clear that the information shared will remain confidential.
 - A good listener only challenges when assertions are made based on incorrect information. These interventions are still very carefully timed. For example, it often makes sense to correct someone once they have fully expressed themselves.
 - A good listener avoids clichés and **patronizing** (*reducing the other person in some way*) the other person, avoiding sentences like ‘I know exactly how you feel’.
 - A good listener finds a good space in which a person can speak freely.
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