

*“Watching the kids play, laugh, and be silly was so rewarding. DrawBridge allows youth to take control over their creativity and make a piece of work they can call their own!” – Dorothy B., Teen Volunteer*

## Active Listening

*“Nothing feels so good as being understood, not evaluated or judged. When I try to share some feeling aspect of myself and my communication is met with evaluation, reassurance, or distortion of my meaning, I know what it is to be alone.”*

– Carl Rogers, psychologist

### Characteristics of an Empathic Listener:

- You have the desire to focus on the other person, rather than to project your own feelings and ideas onto him or her.
- You have the desire to be non-defensive, meaning your focus isn't on protecting yourself in the conversation. When you are protecting yourself, it is difficult to focus on the other person.
- You have the desire to imagine the roles, perspectives, or experiences of the other person, rather than assuming they are just like you.
- You have the desire to listen as a receiver, not as a critic. Your goal is to understand that person, not come to an agreement or change them.

### Listening Techniques:

Being present with a child, getting on their level, and actively listening helps them feel important and validated. You can demonstrate that you are listening using the following techniques:

#### » Attending and acknowledging:

Indicate verbal or non-verbal awareness of the other person (eye contact, head nodding, holding still)

#### » Restating and paraphrasing:

Restate, using your own language, what you heard the person say

### The Value of Silence:

Often we try to engage with children by asking a lot of questions or carrying on a one-sided conversation, as if they have little to add. It can be a great gift to a child to just sit with them and witness their process of making art. Allowing silence to occur at times gives the child permission to relax and just be

themselves in that moment. It is sometimes your silence that can most effectively communicate that you accept and value them just as they are. Of course children will engage you in conversation and you can respond, but try to let them lead the dialogue.

These training clips illustrate the difference between a conversation involving constant interruption and one where active listening is occurring.



[Active Listening  
Video 1](#)



[Active Listening  
Video 2](#)

Please read "Could you Just Listen?" on the next page.

## "Could You Just Listen?"

When I ask you to listen to me, and you start giving me advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me, and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen, not talk to or do - just hear me.

Advice is cheap; 20 cents will get you both Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the same paper. I can do for myself; I am not helpless – maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless. When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and can get about this business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling. When that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make more sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people – because God is mute, and He/She doesn't give you advice or try to fix things. "They" just listen and let you work it out for yourself.

So please listen and just hear me.

And if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn - and I'll listen to you.

— *Author, An Anonymous Homeless Person*