ACTIVE LISTENING

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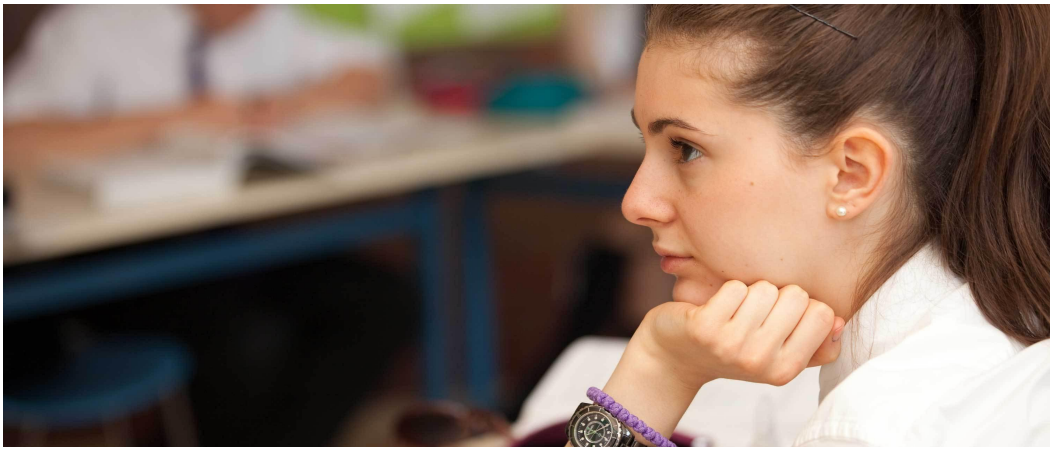

Listening is perhaps the most effective leadership skill one can have. When you listen to someone, you can get useful information and by combining it with questions, you will not only get a better understanding but also will help the other person discover the knowledge he/she already had about that subject.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

The definition is a combination of two words:

Active: causing action, motion or change; focused and involved

Listen: make a conscious effort to hear and understand; attend closely.

This indicates the difference between hearing (just a physical experience of sounds being perceived by our hearing system and translated in our brain) and listening, where a careful focus is made on the speaker to determine content AND meaning. When practicing Active Listening, you capture the meaning the speaker wants to convey and see things from the speaker's perspective paying attention to assumptions, contradictions, and consistency that they make or that you have.

HOW TO ACTIVELY LISTEN

To actively listen, keep these tips in mind:

- Don't interrupt
- Be conscious of your body language as well as the body language of the other person
- Seek to understand before being understood
- Show appreciation for the unique value of the person and the message
- Be able to summarize and paraphrase
- Get into the other person's perspective
- Suspend making judgments
- Ask questions, don't assume you understand by filling in the gaps of information with your own imagination or assumptions; verify this with the speaker

Remember to give time, respect the silence, and don't push or rush the person. Often times, the more we push, the more defensive the other person gets. This causes them to hold on to their beliefs and not see your point for fear of being wrong. Your intent is to understand.

PARAPHRASING AND VERIFYING

There are two techniques that you can use to make sure the message was communicated effectively. These include Paraphrasing and Verifying.

Paraphrasing: Stating what the person said in your own words

Verifying: Asking a question to check for understanding.

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