Active Listening

Name

Institution

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Active listening skills help an individual to develop effective interpersonal relationships with others. Majority of individuals take their active listening skills for granted assuming that others know that they are listening to them appropriately (Janusik, 2017). Active listening is not just about listening to others’ words rather it encapsulates accepting criticism in constructive way, dealing with others’ feelings and struggling to understand what others think and expect. I applied following techniques in a recent conversation and the results were expectedly effectual.

The first technique of active listening is paying close attention to the minute details of one’s conservation and holding response time appropriately. This is because attention is the first step in memory development and when nothing is being added to conscious memory; we cannot remember and respond to it (Janusik, 2017). I listened to my friend attentively and tried to communicate the same. I tried my best to not to interrupt him and allowed him complete his sentences. However, I started formulating answers in mind soon after he started speaking but I did not utter any words while he was talking.

The second technique that I applied was being non- judgmental and open towards new perspectives, ideas and new possibilities. I did not react desperately when he presented some contradictory thoughts, opinions and feelings. Although I had stronger arguments yet I suspended judgment, held criticism and avoided arguments that might create unfavorable environment for further conversation. Being judgment will hinder his ability to talk freely such as if he says I lied because of certain reasons; if I instantly label him as liar, he would feel uncomfortable and would suspend further argumentation.

It is very important to make others realize that we are on the same page regarding topic under discussion. Reflecting upon their feelings is the third effective technique of active listening. I did not assume that I understood everything correctly rather I mirrored the information presented by him by paraphrasing some key points periodically. Emotional responses are also very important in this regard. For example, when he felt enthusiastic about something, I also manipulated my words enthusiastically so that he could understand that we are on the same page.

The fourth technique that I used is clarity; I did not hesitate while asking questions when I found something unambiguous or unclear. I used phrases like “*let me see if I am clear....” “Am I guessing it correctly”, “Please wait a minutes, I think I did not follow you.”* Asking questions not only helps use clearing our ambiguities but also makes the counterpart realize that we take taking keen interest in what he is telling (McNaughton et. al., 2007). Such phrases helped me making sense of the conversation so that I could respond accordingly. Besides this, I found probing, clarifying and open- ended questions very effective in making my friend realize that I am listening to him attentively.

Fifth technique is restating the key themes extracted from the conversation which solidifies and confirms the gaps between our points of view (McNaughton et. al., 2007). I presented a brief conclusion of the conversation in the end which helped clearing on follow- up and mutual responsibilities. I summarized what I listened and perceived and asked my friend to communicate his thoughts and feelings about my understanding. He then acknowledged either I deduced appropriate meaning from his conversation or not.

By using above mentioned techniques, I intended to gain clearer understanding of my friend’s perspective as I listened and responded to him appropriately, introduced my ideas, suggestions and feelings regarding matter under discussion. I also added similar events that happened to me in the identical contexts and communicated what I did or felt about that and did this response contributed to the positive outcome? What could have done alternatively if my **response did not support favorable consequences? We both attained a clear picture of where we** both stand regarding problem matter and how this problem can be solved? What we tried, what needs to be tried and what must be tried; our conversation turned out to be a problem- focused talk in the end.

This conversation was completely different from other ones with the same person because I used to disrupt him instantly, could not wait for my turn to respond, ignored the emotional component and demonstrated judgmental attitude towards him. He used to suspend conversation, stop talking and show agitation towards me. However, at this time, he continued talking till the very end and we have had a productive talk with each other. It was the first time we came up with a mutual opinion with a problem- solving orientation. We did not mess up with our own views rather we listened each others’ viewpoints appropriately with an open attitude.

These skills are quite essential for others to develop productive conversation in an amicable environment where everyone could share his ideas freely without any fear of being judged. It will affect my future interpersonal relationships in a constructive way because the concept of active listening is what relates directly with the psychology of individuals. It is based on the principles of psychology that how can we influence each other through our verbal and non- verbal gestures and orientations. I will try to apply some other techniques of active listening such as Validation, Emotional Intelligence, Problem Sensitivity, Courtesy, Professionalism, Transparency, Humility, Integrity, Confidence, Empathy, Compassion, Vocal tone, Sensitivity to Religious and Ethnic Diversity and Self-Awareness to strengthen my interpersonal relationships through conversation.

References

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