



## HEARD! Lesson Four Become an Active Listener

Time: 45 minutes

### Overview:

In this lesson students will experience first-hand what it is like to become an 'active listener' and what it is like to be listened to by an 'active listener'. They will practice the needed attributes to become an 'active listener' such as eye contact and subtle response techniques. Most importantly, they will learn by experience that to gather information for a story, they need to become active listeners while engaging with their interviewees.

### Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- be able to describe attributes of active listening.
- experience first-hand that competent listening skills are a factor toward their success.
- identify 'active' listening skills in comparison to 'passive' listening skills.
- practice listening techniques and skills.

### HEARD! Glossary:

- *Active Listening*: is a communication technique that requires that the listener to fully concentrate, understand, respond and then remember what is being said.

### Materials for Instructor:

- Blackboard or projection: Two ways to become an Active Listener
  - Eye Contact
    - Using eye contact lets speaker know you are listening.
  - Responding
    - Let the speaker know you have heard him or her by commenting on what they are saying or asking questions.
- Blackboard or projection: Definition of an Active Listener
  - Active listening is fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just

passively 'hearing' the message of the speaker.

### Materials for Students:

- HEARD! Journals`

#### I. Opening Discussion: Becoming a reporter & 'Listening' is a Form of Communication (5 Min.)

- Begin the discussion by asking students what they think are the best techniques for journalists to gather information for their stories. Lead them into a discussion about the importance of listening to your sources.
- Ask the class if they consider listening an active or passive state. Go to the HEARD! Glossary and define active listening as a class. At the end of the class you will ask the same question and see if the youth provide different answers.
- Listening is a form of nonverbal communication and when practiced with focus can be active, not passive.

#### II. Telephone game (7 Min.)

- Share that we will begin an exploration of 'listening' communication with a game they may know called 'telephone'. Let them know that even though it is a game for children there is something we can learn from it in today's class.
- Have everyone sit in a circle and explain the rules. A five sentence story is going to be shared with the lead person and will be passed on through a whisper to everyone in the room, one at a time. The lead person will see the story on the index card and whisper it to the next person. The next person must listen to it and then whisper it to the person next to him or her. It must be shared exactly as heard- word for word. If someone wants to hear it again that person is allowed only one chance. That person must say 'operator' and it is whispered one more time!
- When the story has gone around the room the last person shares what they have been told out loud to the group. Then the lead person shares what the original story was that he or she shared.
- Most likely the end story shared is quite different than the original story.
- Guide students go back within the circle and see where the story began to be misheard. This is a fun exercise and it alerts the youth that listening is important, and hearing things incorrectly has consequences.

#### III. Becoming an Active Listener (5 Min.)

Now it is time to guide students in understanding what the differences are between being a 'passive listener' and an 'active listener'.

- Begin the discussion with asking if the youth consider 'listening' a form of

communication? (Listen to responses).

- Ask the youth if listening is a passive or subdued state of being or if they think listening is an active state of being?
- Let the youth know that listening is an active state and developing the skills to become an 'active listener' are essential for good communication. In this lesson the exercises will highlight the importance of being an active listener.

### Communication between the Speaker and the Listener (5 Min.)

Discuss with the youth that it takes two people for communication to take place; one speaker and one listener. However, it takes the attention of both people for clear communication to occur.

- Select one volunteer to come up for a communication demonstration. Let the volunteer and the class know that this is a role play. Put two chairs across from each other and sit and face each other. Tell the volunteer you want to know all about his or her favorite meal. Tell him or her you want a long detailed description. What is on the plate? What are the colors? Where did the meal originate? Etc.
- As the volunteer describes the meal to you look up at the ceiling, look at the floor, look at other students in the room, fix your hair, tie a shoelace, etc. When the volunteer has finished his or her story most likely the class will be laughing.
- Turn to the volunteer and ask the following questions:
  - Do you think I heard you? Why or why not?
  - Do you think I understood you? Why or why not?

### IV. Attributes of good listening (5 Min.)

Share with students two ways they can become better listeners:

- **Eye Contact**
  - Using eye contact lets speaker know you are listening.
- **Responding**
  - Let the speaker know you have heard him or her by commenting on what they are saying or asking questions.
- **Add any other attributes that the students shared that are applicable**
  - Student Example

### V. Partner Listening Exercise (8 Min.)

It is now time for students to practice the active listening attributes they have learned in the class.

- Have students sit down face to face with a partner. One student will be Partner A and the other Partner B. Partner A will be the speaker and have three minutes

to share a story about a time it was hard to tell the truth, and it was difficult, but you did anyway

- . Partner B will be the 'active listener.'
- Let the students know that the speaker does not have to speak continuously for three minutes but can take breaks while telling his or her story.
- Tell the students when to start and begin the three minutes, tell them when they are at the halfway point, and then when the time is over. Then they switch roles and start the clock again.

## VI. Partner to Partner Feedback (3 Min.)

Having the students give each other feedback starts to build peer to peer relationships.

- Let the students know they will now give each other feedback on their listening skills.
- Project questions for them to address:
  - How did it feel?
  - Did you feel your partner was really listening to you?
  - What was he or she doing or not doing?
  - Was it difficult and why?
  - What does it feel like to listen and not give your opinion?
  - Let them know they can ask any questions about each other's stories!

## Closing

Begin the closing discussion by circling back and asking the students:

- Now that we have gone through this lesson, do you think listening is an active or passive state?
- Do you have a different answer than from the start of this lesson?
- Choosing to be an 'active listener' rather than a 'passive listener' creates good and clear communication between the speaker and listener.