

HOW TO LISTEN

MATERIALS |

“5 Levels of Listening”
handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to understand what it means to listen empathetically and to begin practicing doing so.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Explain to participants that the Relationships Initiative requires a lot of sharing and listening. Although humans do a lot of listening in our lives, we are often not very good at it. Introduce Stephen Covey’s 5 Levels of Listening (see appendix).

Invite participants to recall the last time they were speaking to someone. What kind of listener were they in this conversation? How were they listened to by the person they were talking to? Share out as a large group.

Brainstorm as a large group ways to listen empathetically—What would it look like? What would you be saying? What would you be doing? Where would your phone be? How much would you interrupt? What kinds of questions would you ask, etc.

Divide participants into pairs and invite them to have a discussion in which they practice empathetic listening. Provide a prompt such as: What is something you are really passionate about? Or What is your favorite tv show, song, or artist right now and why?

Give each person 3-5 minutes to share while their partner listens and then switch roles.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How do you think you did as a listener?
- How well did you feel your partner listened to you?
- What additional things could you work on to be a better listener?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/building-foundational-skills/>

NOTES |

Feel free to use a different listening framework if there is one you are already using or familiar with.

The Five Levels of Listening

Ignoring	someone is talking or sharing but you are not really listening to them at all
Pretend Listening	you may be facing someone and may seem like you are listening but you still aren't really paying attention to what they are saying or are distracted by other things
Selective Listening	you only pay attention to or recall the things that are interesting to you or that you agree with in what someone else has said; this can lead to misinterpreting or misrepresenting what the person actually said
Attentive Listening	you are actively listening, paying attention, and asking follow up questions but you may still be filtering what they say through your own perspectives, making judgements based on your own experiences, focusing on what you can take away, or listening with the intent to respond rather than trying to understand the other person and their perspective
Empathetic Listening	you are fully focused on the person you are listening to and are seeking to to put yourself in their shoes and understand their perspectives, needs, and feelings, rather than your own

Adapted from Stephen Covey