

# ACTIVITY SHEET 9: ACTIVE LISTENING

Think about when someone gave you their full attention and listened to what you had to say. Active listening is encouraging. It builds trust, deepens understanding, and de-escalates anger and tension.

Listening is a skill that takes practice. When it is done well, agreements are stronger, plans are better developed, and organizations are higher functioning.

Here are five things to practice and keep in mind the next time someone is speaking:

## GIVE YOUR FULL ATTENTION

- Avoid distractions. Close your laptop, turn your cell phone on silent, and set aside tasks.
- Set aside your own worries, deadlines, and preoccupations so you can focus on the other person

## RESERVE JUDGMENT

- Avoid jumping to conclusions or sharing your opinion about what is said. Set aside the impulse to agree, disagree, or give advice.
- Simply listen and focus on understanding what the speaker is thinking and how they are feeling.

## BE AWARE OF BODY LANGUAGE

- *Show* your attention by facing the person and maintaining eye contact.
- Avoid expressions that can be interpreted as defensive, disinterested, or aggressive (e.g. crossed arms, looking away, frowning).

## GIVE THE SPEAKER TIME

- Let the speaker finish their thoughts completely. Be careful to never interrupt.
- Don't rush the speaker. Allow enough time to hear them out. If necessary, apologize and schedule another meeting

## INQUIRE TO UNDERSTAND

- Ask questions respectfully and not aggressively. Listen to the answers
- Show you want a complete understanding of what the speaker has to say.

“The most precious gift we can offer anyone is our attention.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh

This Activity Sheet was written by staff and student leaders of SOMECA. The concepts and tips have been developed through application and reflection.