

BESTT EARS Activity:

Divide into teams of four and each person take one role: SPEAKER, LISTENER, NON-VERBAL OBSERVER, or VERBAL OBSERVER. After running through the exercise once (about seven minutes), switch roles so that the SPEAKER and LISTENER are now OBSERVERS and repeat the exercise.

Objective: Give everyone a chance to observe and practice the individual skills of Active Listening

Speaker:

1. Pick a situation that you or a friend has experienced at school or work
 - a. Suggestions
 - i. Falling behind in a course or scoring badly on an exam
 - ii. Feeling unsupported by a professor/faculty member
 - iii. Having a difficult time getting along while doing a group project
 - iv. Being teased or bullied by a colleague
2. Give a short (two or three minutes) description of the situation to the listener twice
 - a. During the first time be vague so the listener can ask clarifying questions before reflecting/paraphrasing.
 - b. During the second time restate with added detail so the listener can summarize.

Listener:

1. Use your “BESTT” skills to situate yourself while you’re listening.
 - a. Try different ideas each time the speaker tells their story.
 - i. Practice “Body Position” by adjusting the way you hold your body-relaxed, leaning forward, mirroring the speaker, etc.
 - ii. Practice “Eye Contact” (even if it seems a little uncomfortable)!
 - iii. Practice “Space” by adjusting your distance from the speaker, or your body’s direction towards the speaker.
2. The speaker will tell their story twice. Use your “EARS.” Try to be “Encouraging” each time they tell it.
 - a. The first time the speaker tells their story, practice “Ask Questions” to clarify the situation, and practice “Restate/Paraphrase” to reflect the thoughts and feelings they are sharing.
 - b. The second time the speaker tells their story, practice “Summarize” to let them know you have been paying attention.

Non-verbal Observer:

1. Use your knowledge of “BESTT” to observe the speaker and listener during the exercise.
 - a. Watch to see how both the speaker and listener have their “Body” positioned.
 - i. Is it relaxed? Rigid? Slouched? Does the listener match the speaker’s position?
 - b. Watch to see how much “Eye Contact” the speaker gives the listener.
 - i. A lot? A little? Does it increase or decrease as the exercise progresses?
 - c. Watch to see how the listener uses “Space”
 - i. Is the listener close to the speaker? Are they facing one another? Does the listener use space in any way to show attentive listening?

Verbal Observer:

1. Use your knowledge of “EARS” to observe both the speaker and the listener during the exercise
 - a. Watch to see how the listener is using “Encouraging”
 - i. Is it obvious? Did the speaker respond to this encouragement?

First Time through:

- b. Watch to see how the listener uses “Ask Questions” to clarify during the first time the speaker tells the story
 - i. Did the questions elicit additional detail? Were the questions respectful and relevant? How did the speaker respond to the questions?
- c. Watch to see how the listener uses “Restate/Paraphrase” to reflect during the speaker’s story
 - i. Did the listener catch the feeling of the speaker accurately? Did the speaker respond positively to the reflections?

Second Time: through

- d. Watch to see how the listener uses “Summarizing” to demonstrate an understanding of the major points during the final time the speaker tells the story
 - i. Was the summary accurate? Did the speaker agree with the summary? Did the listener use the speaker’s words during the summary or did the listener use similar words that still captured the speaker’s meaning without parroting?