

Organization and country: Ireland

Name of the activity: Practicing empathetic listening

Overview (What I am going to learn?):

In this exercise you will discover and practise techniques for listening empathetically to another person.

You will learn that empathetic listening goes beyond that listening with your ears.

Objective (What am I going to learn it for?):

It will enable me to develop my empathic listening skills which will position me as a team member who can facilitate the creation of a favourable atmosphere in my work place.

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Materials:

Articles to hand out:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/7-habits-highly-empathetic-coach-chandan-lal-patary/>

<https://www.ceuiam.com/en/business-school/in-your-co-workers-shoes--post>

Videos:

Sympathy Vs Empathy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw&t=7s>

Time: Total Estimated time 45 minutes

Target group: Professionals working in the same company, ideally from different departments

Instructions for facilitators

The aim of this exercise is to provide practical training

A group of people will be asked to do listening exercises in order to evaluate areas for listening skills improvement

The exercise also provides a series of questions in order to generate an open and constructive dialogue between participants

Tasks and procedures:

Phase 1: Describing phase

1. Ask the member to chose a partner to work with, ideally from different departments.
2. Each of them will describe a professional situation from day-to-day life or that has happened in the past.
3. It should have a high emotional content.
4. Time to tell the story: 3 to 5 minutes per situation described

Phase 2: Q&A

1. The facilitator will allow 5 minutes so the can ask questions to each other.

Phase 3: Re-telling the story and open discussion

1. Chose 2 volunteers to tell the situation they have listened, to the rest of the people in the training that will be also empathetically listening
2. Time: Volunteers will have 5 minutes each
3. Open discussion in which the moderator will ask open questions to both the speakers and the listeners. Time 15 minutes.

Body language questions:

1. Tone of voice in general and in each phase of the story, especially the more emotional ones.
2. Body posture
3. Gaze
4. Facial expression
5. Specific details:
 - a. Specific difficulties they have heard
 - b. Fears that you have expressed or that, even if not expressed, you may be hiding
 - c. Emotions that have not been expressed in the story but that we think are there.
 - d. Situations in which the listeners may have experienced something similar.

Self-reflection questions:

1. What did I think during the exercise? - To detect interest in the exercise
2. What did I think about the story? - To see if they pre-judge the story
3. Do I think I got all the information? – to detect if the listeners listened patiently and with interest
4. What did I feel? - To detect whether they listened to the other person's feelings or listened with their heart.
5. What do you think about what did? - To detect whether the response was prejudiced or described facts that you simply wanted to understand.
6. Did I hear the story recalling something that has happened to me in the past? - To detect if the listener was connecting his or her own heart or emotions.
7. Did I listen by mentally preparing the solution to the problem or the answer I am going to give rather than listening to:
 - a. Get information
 - b. Understand
 - c. Enjoy listening
 - d. Understand

Questions to evaluate if the speaker felt listened to:

1. Did the listener...?
 - a. Nod occasionally.
 - b. Smile and use other facial expressions.
 - c. Make sure that your posture is open and interested.
 - d. Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and "uh huh."

- e. Use the technique of paraphrasing? Did he asked for clarification?
 - i. "What I'm hearing is.... ,"
 - ii. "Sounds like you are saying.... ,"
 - iii. "What do you mean when you say.... ."
 - iv. "Is this what you mean?"

Conclusion and evaluation:

In this phase each member will be asked to identify one or two empathetic listening skills to which he/she would be willing to give special attention during the following month.

On a voluntary basis, each member will be asked to commit to sending the facilitator two cases in which they have applied empathetic listening, explaining the areas in which they have improved and the areas in which they would like to be supported in the future.