

A monthly newsletter published by Interface EAP

## Using Active Listening Skills to Defuse Anger

**I**ntense emotions together with a perceived loss of control could trigger acts of aggression, (nonverbal, verbal, or physical). A communication technique called “active listening” can help the individual to regain control of their own emotions and behavior and decrease the risk of a more violent incident.

### First Steps:

- Maintain your own control. Stay centered. Breathe slowly and evenly. Lower your voice.
- Stay calm, caring, attentive, and concerned. Act professionally.
- Ask questions but do not be judgmental. Seek to understand what the person is feeling or wanting behind the angry behavior.

### Active Listening Tips:

- Introduce yourself, let them know why you are there, and ask how you can help. The earlier you can engage a person in conversation, the more likely they can regain control.
- Focus on the speaker. Ask permission to use their first name.
- Stay objective. Do not react to what is being said. And do not take their words personally.
- Listen attentively without planning your next statement as you are listening. Do not try to problem solve.
- Minimize distractions.
- Listen for key words the person is saying.

### Encouraging:

Use your language and body sincerely to encourage the person’s train of thought. Use phrases like:

- “I see.....”
- “Hmmm” or “mm hmm”
- “Uh huh” or “I understand”
- “Oh?” or “Really?”
- “Right” or “Sure”
- “Please, go on”



### Use Body Language/Posture:

- Nod your head
- Reflect facial expressions
- Maintain periodic eye contact
- Incline your body toward the speaker
- Face them squarely
- Maintain an open position – avoid arms crossed
- Be aware of personal space

### Reflecting Skills – Paraphrase or Summarize:

By restating the person’s concerns

- Shows you are listening
- Demonstrates you are interested
- Gives the speaker feedback on how their message is being expressed

Restate the essence of what someone said to verify what you heard and understood

- “So, you are suggesting.....”
- “If I understand you correctly.....”
- “Sounds like you are feeling.....”

Offer opportunities for the person to correct or clarify your understanding.

- Use open-ended questions to clarify points (who, what, where, when, why, how).
- Do not give an opinion unless specifically asked.

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## Investing in Workplace Relationships

Are you a master at managing workplace relationships so they become valuable resources rather than sources of irritation, frequent conflicts, or personality clashes that derail a good day? Practice the following six relationship skills and you could be a happier, healthier, and more productive employee:

- 1) **Investment skills** build up or nurture workplace relationships. These include telling others they did a good job, praising your coworkers' accomplishments, and including them in social events.
- 2) **Receptivity skills** include being a good listener, maintaining eye contact, asking for opinions, thanking coworkers for feedback, acknowledging that a coworker helped save you time, energy, embarrassment, etc.
- 3) **Connective skills** include telling coworkers you appreciate them, encouraging them, and honoring others' choices or deferring to what they want or would like to do.
- 4) **Impression skills** help you be remembered. They are positive behaviors some others may not readily practice. These can include sending a handwritten thank you note, taking the lead to coordinate a birthday, and sharing a skill or resource to elevate the effectiveness of a coworker.
- 5) **Empathy skills** include the ability to recognize others' emotions and identify unmet needs such as the need for a break, for recognition, for validation, to be heard, and even the need for a helping hand.
- 6) **Repair skills** include the willingness to discuss your relationship, clear the air, and "check in" to address misunderstandings and obstacles that prevent good feelings about the relationship.

## Stress Management Never Smelled So Good

Stress is a part of everyday life. Sometimes even having to plan an activity, which should help you de-stress, can actually cause you even more stress.

Aromatherapy works by activating the limbic and olfactory systems. There is much to be said for the many scents we encounter throughout our daily lives. Ever notice how simply taking a walk in nature can calm you down? Or perhaps it is not the outdoor smell, but the smell of vanilla, cinnamon, or homemade cookies. Smell has a powerful connection to memory and can be extremely healing.

In 2002, Japanese researchers found that the simple inhalation of patchouli and rose oil reduced sympathetic nervous activity by 40%, with rose oil reducing adrenaline concentrations by 30%. Many flowers, in fact, are uniquely well-suited to calm the human body. Lavender oil, for instance, has also been studied for the ability to reduce stress, anxiety, aggression and cortisol levels, among two dozen other therapeutic properties.

### Here are some plants to consider:

*Lavender* - helps with irritability, insomnia, stress, headaches, shock states, and more

*Mint* - muscle relaxer, helps with indigestion and migraines

*Rosemary* - helps with depression, anxiety, physical tiredness, and helps to refresh the mind

*Ylang ylang* - refreshes the mind, helps combat depression



### How to use them?

Simply putting fresh roses on your desk can bring you great benefits. If you cannot find fresh plants, you can also try essential oils. A few concentrated drops in bath water or dabbing a small amount of the plant's oils on your wrists or temples will do the trick. Essential oil candles or sprays can also promote relaxation, but always make sure the ingredients are pure and direct from the plant, instead of synthetically replicated in a lab.

## Using Active Listening Skills to Defuse Anger *continued*

Often when a person feels “heard” their anxiety or anger will be defused. Once you understand the issues and the person has calmed down, you can begin to find mutually agreeable solutions.

### Next steps if active listening does not work:

1. Validate reality, and then identify what behavior is causing the problem:  
 “I can understand why you are so upset, John. I need you to lower your voice.”
2. Explain why the behavior is causing the problem:  
 “Others here are upset when they hear loud voices.” Or... “It upsets me to hear you so loud and angry.”
3. You cannot control other people’s behavior, but you can give them choices. State the positive choice first then the negative consequence, otherwise the person will react and will not hear the positive choice:  
 “When you lower your voice, we’ll talk about what to do.” “If you raise your voice again, we will need to stop for the day.”
4. Give time to choose so that it does not seem like a threat or an ultimatum. Do not be afraid of “white space (silence)”:  
 “I’ll be right back and you can tell me your decision”
5. Enforce consequences – this is the most important step.  
 “You need to leave the building now.”

### What happens if you do not enforce consequences? They will not believe you or change their behavior.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS	REASONS	EXAMPLES
<b>Clarifying</b>	1) To get additional facts 2) To help the speaker explore all sides of the problem.	3) “Can you clarify this...?” 4) “Do you mean this...?” 5) “Is this the problem as you see it?”
<b>Paraphrasing</b>	1) To check your meaning and interpretation with the person talking. 2) To encourage the speaker to analyze other aspects of matters being considered and to discuss them with you.	3) “As I understand it, your plan is....” 4) “This is what you have decided to do and the reasons are.....”
<b>Neutral</b>	1) To convey that you are listening and interested 2) To encourage the person to continue talking	3) “I see.” 4) “Uh huh.” 5) “That is very interesting.” 6) “I understand.”
<b>Reflective</b>	1) To show that you understand. 2) To help the person to evaluate feelings as expressed to someone else	3) “You feel that....” 4) “It was shocking.”
<b>Summarizing</b>	1) To bring all the discussion into focus in terms of a summary. 2) To serve as a springboard for further discussion on a new aspect of the problem.	3) “These are the key ideas expressed....” 4) “If I understand how you feel about the situation....”

**Stress**

**Financial**

**Legal**

**Depression**

For free and confidential assistance, call your  
Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator:

(713) 781-3364

(800) 324-4327

Se Habla Español

(800) 324-2490

**Marital Problems**

**Family Problems**

**Alcohol/Drug Problems**

**Other Referrals**

[www.4eap.com](http://www.4eap.com)

Your employer has contracted with Interface EAP to provide you an Employee Assistance Program.