

# COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS—ACTIVE LISTENING WORKSHEET

**OBJECTIVE:        Listening for the emotions**

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1. *Listen* until the Speaker feels listened to.
2. Listen “agenda free,” *use OPEN questions often.*
3. Avoid sharing your thoughts and feelings too early.
4. Resist urges to give advice or to go into fix-it mode *as a first response.*
5. Fluid, respectful communication means taking turns listening.
6. Communication happens when two heads share the same picture.

**FROM BASIC TO MORE COMPLEX:        (in any order of use)<sup>1</sup>**

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1. **Reflections.** (POINT—*The Speaker still has the floor, and somebody is listening*)  
Saying back the feelings you just heard, being a verbal “mirror” for feelings: Um Hmm. So, you say you were really mad? I hear ya. Keep talking, I’m listening.
2. **Clarification questions.** (POINT—*Clearing up confusion*)  
So let me get this straight, he called you a name? Let me see if I have the facts right... What I hear you saying is,... is that it? Can you explain that again, maybe from a different angle?
3. **Explorations.** (POINT—*Filling in the whole emotional. picture*)  
Is what you mean *this...or that*? It sounds like you weren’t just mad, you were really mad. What else was going on .. for you, .. for them? I wonder if you feel...? What do you think it meant? Can you say more about that part?
4. **Extend.** (POINT—*Connect other feelings that may be just under the surface*)  
Something else seems to be going on inside you, could that be? You were mad, were you also a little bit scared? What else are you thinking, feeling? If it was me I’d feel ..., do you? How does this impact you in this or that area?
5. **Summarize.** (POINT—*Putting the picture together*)  
Okay, you said some things. Let me see if I’ve got it. In other words, \_\_\_\_\_. Is that right?

**Example Situation:**

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A wife comes home unexpectedly from work. She is upset and begins telling her story to her husband. She explains that there was a big lay-off at work and she no longer has a job. “I can’t believe it!” She puts her things down that she brought home from her office. “There was no warning,” she says out loud after a silence. She is caught up in her thoughts and hasn’t yet noticed the tension building in her husband. “We were all shocked!” she exclaimed. Finally her husband says, “What do you mean, ‘no warning’? Couldn’t you see that there were problems?!” “Well,” she starts (feeling a little caught off balance), “I guess I could have but I didn’t. But neither did...” Her husband interrupts, “Now what? Have you thought about looking in the paper at the job ads?” It wasn’t really a question. “We can’t go very long without the extra income.” At this point the wife feels too discouraged to continue talking to her husband. She doesn’t feel that he is listening to her.

Where was the husband’s focus? \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite his comments if his focus had been on his wife’s emotions:

<b>1. Reflections</b>	Wife: “ <i>I can’t believe it!</i> ”
Husband:	Wife’s new response:
<b>2. Clarification questions</b>	Wife: “ <i>There was no warning.</i> ”
Husband:	Wife’s new response:
<b>3. Exploration</b>	Wife: “ <i>We were all shocked!</i> ”
Husband:	Wife’s new response:
<b>4. Extend</b>	Husband’s thought: What else might she be experiencing besides shock?
Husband:	Wife’s new response:
<b>5. Summarize</b>	Husband’s grasp of the situation after listening:
	Wife’s likely response:

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from “The Marriage Builder” by Dr. Larry Crabb, 1982