



life



The
30 Day Active
Listening
Challenge

*Develop
Deep Listening Techniques
for more meaningful interactions*

Hello,

WELCOME!

We are so excited to welcome you onto our 30 Day Active Listening Challenge!

Being an active listener is one of the most important skills a counsellor or skilled listener has in their toolbox. It sounds straightforward, right? Not quite. Counsellors and skilled listeners spend a long time honing their active listening skills.

Over the next 30 days, we'll explore 4 core skills that contribute to being an active listener. Each week has a different focus, a listening log to record and reflect on conversations through the week. Weekly reflection questions will encourage you to get into the mindset of a counsellor who is continually reflecting on their practice; what has gone well, what needs improvement, what are my next CPD steps?

This challenge is structured to help you explore the core skills, apply them in a real setting and set your own targets to develop your practice further.

Welcome to the 30 Day Active Listening Challenge! Let's flourish, together!



Are you ready?

LET'S BEGIN!



THE 30 DAY ACTIVE LISTENING
CHALLENGE

Website: : learn.lifecharity.org.uk


Email: ncfe@lifecharity.org.uk

Disclaimer

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A photograph of two men in conversation, overlaid with a teal tint. The man on the left has a beard and is looking towards the man on the right. The man on the right is gesturing with his hands. The background shows vertical blinds.

*“We think we listen,
but very rarely do we listen
with real understanding,
true empathy.*

*Yet listening, of this very
special kind, is one of the
most potent forces for
change that I know.”*

Carl Rogers

Getting Started...

STEP ONE

1

MASTER YOUR MINDSET

Embrace a Growth Mindset: Approach your learning with the mindset that you have a lot to learn, are willing to learn, make mistakes and improve.

Be Present: Commit to being fully present during each listening exercise, set aside distractions like a bing-bonging phone or a noisy radio and focus entirely on the speaker.

Be Consistent: Promise yourself to engage with the daily challenges, even when it feels difficult or inconvenient. Consistent practice is essential for developing habits. 5 minutes is better than 0 minutes!

STEP TWO

2

PLAN AND PREPARE

Review the Weekly Themes: Familiarise yourself with the focus for each week: Attending, Body Language, Using Silence, and Reflecting

Prepare: Download (and print if you wish) the challenge PDF. This will be your guide for the next 30 days. You'll need a way to record your listening logs and reflections. You can use the template on page 10 or this can be in a notebook or journal or on an online space if you prefer.

PARTNER UP AND COMMUNICATE

Find a Practice Partner(s): Let your friends and family know about your challenge and ask for volunteers to practice your newly learned skills within conversations. A fellow student or colleague may also be a partner for the conversations. *If finding a partner is difficult, use a conversation you have had through the week where you implemented some active listening skills and complete a listening log entry reflecting on the conversation.*

Dos and Don'ts: **Do** talk about topics such as: worst or best holiday, special event, DIY successes or failures, hosting a dinner party. **DON'T** talk about a subject that is unresolved or explore a topic that requires a professional counsellor.

STEP THREE

3

How does it work?



The challenge asks you to focus on a different skill each week for 4 weeks. These skills have been specifically chosen to help student counsellors and skilled listeners develop their active listening skills to become 'better' listeners.

Through making use of the Listening Logs and a reflective journal into your daily routine, you will transform your practice into a structured and reflective learning process, inevitably leading towards more meaningful and empathetic interactions.

1 • WEEKLY THEMES - CORE SKILLS TOOLKIT

On pages 6 - 9 you'll find the details of the 4 core skills you'll explore each week. There is a detailed summary of each core skill and behaviours associated with it. You will also find suggestions of how you can incorporate these behaviours into your daily interactions.



2 • COMPLETE THE LISTENING LOGS

Whether you are recording your challenge in a notebook, journal or online, ensure that you complete the listening logs, daily, if possible. The Listening Log encourages self-awareness by prompting you to consciously think about your listening habits. This activity will help you understand your natural tendencies and identify patterns that may be helping or hindering you as a listener.



3 • REFLECT, REFLECT, REFLECT...

Reflect as much as possible, daily if you can!

Use the reflection prompts provided and record using your preferred method. Weekly reflection through journaling provides a structured opportunity to review your experiences, identify patterns, and track your progress over time. Continual reflection enables a counsellor to continuously learn to develop and improve their practice.



Weekly Themes

& tool box



WEEK 1 - ATTENDING

Attending as an active listener means giving the speaker your undivided attention. Making a conscious effort to silence distractions such as a phone, a TV or radio, shows the speaker that what they have to say is important and encourages them to share what they are thinking and feeling.

Key behaviours that show you are attending to the speaker are:

- **Eye contact:** making eye contact with the speaker is a clear indication that they have your full attention. Be natural and don't stare intently, and keep in mind that some people with neurodiversity and some cultures find direct eye contact uncomfortable and even disrespectful.
- **Minimal Encouragers:** Nodding or using words like "uh-huh", "yes", "no", and "mmm" let the speaker know you are listening to and understanding what they are saying.
- **Smile:** Small smiles can be used to show you are paying attention or as a way of agreeing or being happy about the messages being received. Combined with nods of the head, smiles can be powerful in affirming that messages are being understood.

Intentionally incorporating these behaviours into a conversation may sound straightforward and you may think this a frivolous task but all too often we do not intentionally listen to others. Research suggests that we only remember between 25% and 50% of what we hear, meaning that we pay attention for less than half of the conversation.

Reflection Questions

How did you demonstrate your attentiveness during your conversations this week?
What was challenging about staying fully present? What have you discovered about your listening habits?

What surprised you? What challenged you? What can you take forward to develop your skills as an active listener?

WEEK 2 - BODY LANGUAGE

Paying attention to your own **body language** and that of the speaker is a key element of active listening. Your posture alone tells the speaker a lot about how ready you are to listen. Making slight adjustments to how you sit or stand, what you do with your hands and feet, and mirroring aspects of the speaker's body language can all make a big difference to how open and comfortable the speaker will feel.



Key behaviours that counsellors use regarding body language are:

- **Posture:** Posture can tell a lot about the interactions between a speaker and a listener. Leaning forward or sideways when sitting shows that the listener is being attentive. Displaying an 'open' posture avoids coming across as closed off, disinterested or defensive and can make the speaker feel more at ease.
- **Mirroring:** Mirroring the speaker by adopting aspects of their body language, e.g. sitting in a similar position, holding your head or hand in a similar way, helps to develop a rapport with the speaker which may encourage them to open up and share more of their thoughts and feelings.
- **Observation:** Paying close attention to the speaker's body language may give you more information about how they are feeling or if they need a pause to think something through.

Reflection Questions

How did you use your body language to show you were attentive to the speaker? What impact do you think your body language had on the conversation, if any? How did it feel to try and mirror the speaker? Did you observe anything in the speaker that helped you understand what they were saying?

What surprised you? What challenged you? What can you take forward to develop your skills as an active listener?



WEEK 3 - USING SILENCE

Silence can leave us a bit cold. Too many silences and silences that are too long can feel uncomfortable and awkward. But, did you know that using silence is one of the most powerful tools a counsellor can use? Silence allows the speaker to pause, to think, to share more of their thoughts and feelings. It also allows the listener to dig into their active listening skills, allowing them to take notice of any non-verbal cues that can reveal more of what the speaker is thinking and feeling.

Clues that it may be useful to remain silent are:

- If the person stops speaking but doesn't look at you, this may be a sign that they are thinking something through. Staying silent will give them time to process and possibly share more.
- Pausing mid-sentence or struggling to find the words may suggest that the person needs time to organise their thoughts or work through some strong feelings. Allowing for silence can give them the opportunity to collect their thoughts and articulate their feelings more effectively.

Tips to help you incorporate silence into your conversations:

- **Get comfortable with silence:** Try to wait 3-5 seconds before responding to the speaker. Can you stretch to a longer silence of up to 10 seconds? Resist the urge to fill the pause with unnecessary words.
- **Non-verbal encouragement:** Use your body language to show that you are engaged and supportive during silent moments. Nodding, maintaining eye contact, and leaning forwards slightly can encourage the speaker to speak when they are ready.
- **Facial expressions:** Maintain a calm, open facial expression. Avoid showing discomfort or impatience as this can discourage the speaker from sharing more.

Reflection Questions

How did you feel during moments of silence in the conversations you had this week? How did the silence impact the speaker? How did you manage the moments of silence?

What surprised you? What challenged you? What can you take forward to develop your skills as an active listener?



WEEK 4 - REFLECTING

Who would have thought that something as simple as reflecting someone's thoughts and feelings back to them would be such a powerful counselling tool?

Reflecting is when the listener repeats the speaker's words back to them exactly as they have been said. Reflecting done well can make the speaker feel truly seen, that their experiences are real and significant, and can help them come to a better understanding of themselves and what they are going through.

Key points to remember when reflecting:

- Try to **match** the tone the speaker uses as well as their body language or expression.
- **Reflect back** whole statements, or key words that capture the meaning and importance of what has been said.
- Reflect in a way that is **non-judgmental** and **accepting**. This creates a safe space for the speaker to express themselves without fear of criticism or invalidation
- Use **open questions** to encourage the speaker to explore their thoughts and feelings further. You may say things like "Can you tell me more about what makes you feel this way?" or "What's the most challenging part of this situation for you?"

Reflection Questions

How effective are you at selecting key statements or words that capture the feeling and importance of what has been said? What helps you do this? Am I capturing both what the speaker says and how they feel? How do I ensure my reflections are non-judgmental and supportive? How often do I use open questions and how effective have they been in encouraging the speaker to open up?

What surprised you? What challenged you? What can you take forward to develop your skills as an active listener?

Listening Log

Date :

S M T W T F S

Brief outline of conversation

Reflection

Active Listening Skills

Circle skills used



Attending



Body Language



Using Silence



Reflecting

Next Steps:

Thinking about what went well and what was tricky or down right difficult,
what steps you could take to improve your practice?

Reflect, Prepare, & Recharge

STEP ONE

1

REFLECT

Take time to reflect on your journey throughout the challenge.

Review your learning logs and journal entries.

- How consistently have I been implementing the different core skills?
- What positives have I noticed?
- What challenges have I faced?
- How can I overcome these in the future?

Consider which core skills or combination of skills have been most beneficial for you and your conversations. Are there any that were more of a challenge? Why do you think this is?

STEP TWO

2

PREPARE

Prepare your next steps. Identify the core skills you found most challenging and plan ways to deepen your understanding and develop your practice. You may want to put in some further practice and request feedback from the speaker to give you a different perspective. You could also undertake some professional reading on the area, attend an online workshop or webinar where you can put questions to a tutor. You'll find a target setting activity template on the next page which will help you set SMART targets to keep you going with your development.

STEP THREE

3

CELEBRATE & RECHARGE

Take a moment to recognise and celebrate all your hard work and the leaps you have made in your development! Perhaps more importantly, take time to recharge! Developing counselling skills can be emotionally and mentally taxing. Putting in a lot of work to personal and professional development requires rest in order to manage your own stress levels and prevent burnout. Spend some time on your favourite hobby, get outside for fresh air and gentle exercise, or arrange a catch up with a friend. Taking a break from studies, or other CPD or personal development tasks is just as important as focusing on them. Soon you'll be ready to dive into your studies again with renewed enthusiasm and vigor!

Next Steps...

Date :

Active Listening Skills

Circle the skill(s) you wish to further develop.



Attending



Body Language



Using Silence



Reflecting

What was challenging about implementing this skill(s)?

What could help you move forward?
What resources can help you?
Professional reading, workshops,
mentorship, practice opportunities

Next Steps:

Identify actionable steps to continue to develop your practice and understanding of the skill(s)

a gentle reminder...

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Thank you for your cooperation.

You've done it!

Thank you for embracing our 30 Day Active Listening Challenge! We hope this journey has provided you with valuable insights into some of the core skills in a counsellor's toolbox and that you have developed your own active listening skills. We'd love to hear from you! Reach out and let us know how it went!

Email us at ncfe@lifecharity.org.uk



Are you ready to rewrite your future and begin your journey to becoming a counsellor or skilled listener?

Check out our Counselling Skills Pathway!

Courses Designed by Experts - who are experienced and practicing counsellors

Step-by-Step Course - with user- friendly platform and support every step of the way

Practical Skills Workshop - tutor led workshops to build confidence in core counselling skills

Tailored 1:1 Support - from our highly rated team who are experienced in delivering online courses

Your Learning at Your Pace - complete your studies and achieve your qualification in less than 12 months. 100% success pass rate!

FIND US AT:

- Website: learn.lifecharity.org.uk
- Email: ncfe@lifecharity.org.uk



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NEED MORE INSIGHT?

BOOK A CALL

*with a member
of the team*



Would like to know more about the courses and volunteer opportunities with Life? Book a call with a member of the team and we will be happy to talk through the best starting point for you, and answer any burning questions you may have.

Alternatively, email us at ncfe@lifecharity.org.uk.

Click the link below and select a time convenient for you!

We look forward to talking with you!

[Book a call with an advisor](#)

A good counsellor is..

empathetic

open

a skilled
listener

self aware

non -
judgemental

trustworthy

life

