

# Active Listening

Active Listening is also crucial to the conversation process. It has been described by Carl Rogers, as the ability of putting yourself in the other person's position, as a means of creating empathy.

The techniques are powerful because they operate below the conscious level. They can be used by the listener to control the amount and depth of information in the interaction. The purpose of the listener is to do everything possible to:

- Give** the speaker every opportunity to speak
- Demonstrate** interest in what is said
- Avoid** interrupting their answers, interpretations or concerns

## Use the Power of the Pause

Silence is, in itself, a great pressure on many people to start talking. Make sure pressure operates on the speaker, not on you. When you've asked a question, say nothing more.

The more penetrating the question, the more likely it is that the speaker will need a few moments to organise the reply. Silence can also be used, together with nodding to signal to the speaker that you want more information.

## Pay Close Attention

Paying attention is flattering, and encourages the speaker to continue. Play with turning the volume up and down on your listening behaviour to draw out a reluctant speaker or close down areas you don't want to pursue.

These behaviours include those obvious things we do without thinking:

- Non-Verbal** Nodding, appropriate small smiles, eye-contact
- Semi-Verbal** Supportive noises, such as 'uh huh, mmm'
- Verbal** Questions and responses such as, 'Really, that's interesting'

## Summarise

Summarising has already been mentioned in the funnelling approach, but it is worth mentioning twice! It can be very flattering to the speaker if the listener gives a short accurate and intelligent summary of what they've just said.

It helps the interaction by providing mutually acceptable milestones, by showing that, as the listener, you really have been paying attention. It also reassures the speaker that they've been understood and can help to clarify:

**So, at this stage, what you're hoping for is..?**