

Checklist for Peer Coordinators

This checklist is designed to help you conduct comprehensive and effective sessions with co-workers. Review the list before a session as a planning tool, and after a session to be sure you covered all the important issues.

- 1. What are the member's immediate needs?**
 - 1.1 Be sure that the meeting is at a good time and in a comfortable/private place for the member.
 - 1.2 Find out if there is an immediate situation that must be addressed (e.g. whether the member is avoiding work, a trip, meeting, or task because of the alleged harasser).
 - 1.3 Find out if there are physical symptoms that need attention (e.g. not eating or sleeping). If the member is very distraught, you may want to suggest that s/he contact medical services.
 - 1.4 Find out whether there is a support system outside of work (family, friends) that can help the member think through a course of action.
- 2. What happened?**
 - 2.1 Let the member tell the story in his/her fashion, using your active listening skills.
 - 2.2 Get the full picture of who is part of the situation (harassers, supervisor, etc.).
 - 2.3 Ask them: What have you done to solve the problem?
 - 2.4 Find out whether the member has contacted anyone else about the situation (the alleged harasser, supervisor, committee, etc).
- 3. What would the member like to see?**
 - 3.1 Get the members to state explicitly what outcome they want.
- 4. Review all the options.**
 - 4.1 Explore all possible courses of action, both formal and informal.
 - 4.2 Help the member understand the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
 - 4.3 Do not impose your beliefs about the best option.
- 5. Explain Your Role.**
 - 5.1 Be clear about what you can and cannot do as a coordinator. Refer to the coordinator manual if you are uncertain about your role.
 - 5.2 If you want to seek guidance from institutional resources, such as Human Resources, a District Office, community services, etc., on giving further advice, let the person know and explain that you will respect his/her privacy.
- 6. Whenever possible, help the member help him/herself.**
 - If appropriate, help the member prepare to confront the situation by talking about how to approach it; role-playing the situation, etc.
 - Encourage the use of outside support systems as needed (e.g., the member's own family, friends, counselors, physicians, etc.)
- 7. End each conversation with a summary of follow-up steps.**
 - 7.1 Go over the points that you both have agreed to (what will the person do, what you will do).
 - 7.2 Agree on when and how to contact them.

LISTENING IS A MASTER SKILL

Listening is rarely taught in schools because educators, along with almost everyone else, assume listening is tantamount to breathing -- automatic. But effective listening is a skill. Like any other skill, competency in listening is achieved through learning and practice. The scarcity of good listeners is self-perpetuating; if you didn't have good listeners to learn from and (especially) models to emulate, you probably didn't master this "master" skill. Instead, you learned whatever passed for listening in your environment; distracted, half attention, constant interruptions, multi-layered, high-volume, talk-fest free-for-alls with little listening at all.



BARRIERS TO LISTENING

Listening takes time. Or more accurately, you have to take time to listen. A life programmed with back-to-back commitments offers little leeway for listening. Similarly, a mind constantly buzzing with plans, dreams, schemes and anxieties is difficult to clear. Good listening requires the temporary suspension of all unrelated thoughts - a blank canvas. In order to become an

effective listener, you have to learn to manage what goes on in your own mind. Technology, for all its glorious gifts, has erected new barriers to listening. Face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations (priceless listening opportunities) are being replaced by email and the sterile anonymity of electronic meeting rooms. Meanwhile television continues to capture countless hours that might otherwise be available for conversation, dialogue, and listening.

Other barriers to listening include;

- worry, fear, anger, grief and depression
- individual bias and prejudice
- semantics and language differences
- noise and verbal "clutter"
- preoccupation, boredom and shrinking attention spans



LISTENING OUT LOUD



A good listener is not just a silent receptacle, passively receiving the thoughts and feelings of others. To be an effective listener, you must respond with verbal and nonverbal cues which let the speaker know - actually prove - that you are listening and understanding. These responses are called feedback.

Verbal feedback works best when delivered in the form of brief statements, rather than questions. Your questions usually get answered if you wait.

Statements allow you to paraphrase and reflect what you've heard, which affirms the speaker's success at communicating and encourages the speaker to elaborate further or delve more deeply into the topic. Meaningful exchanges are built on feedback.

In order to accurately "feed-back" a person's thoughts and feelings, you have to be consciously, actively engaged in the process of listening. Hearing a statement, you create a mental model, vicariously experiencing what the speaker is describing, feeling the speaker's feelings through the filters of your own humanity and experience.



TEN STEPS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

1. Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.
2. Be attentive yet relaxed.
3. Keep an open mind.
4. Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.
5. Don't interrupt and don't impose your "solutions."
6. Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions.
7. Ask questions only to ensure understanding of something that has been said, avoiding questions that disrupt the speaker's train of thought.
8. Try to feel what the speaker is feeling.
9. Give the speaker regular feedback, e.g. summarize statements, reflect feelings, or simply say 'uh huh.'
10. Pay attention to what isn't said - to feelings, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and other nonverbal cues.

Listening is a precious gift - the gift of time. It helps build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding, resolve conflicts, and improve accuracy. At work, effective listening means fewer errors and less wasted time. At home, it helps develop resourceful, self-reliant kids who can solve their own problems. Listening builds friendships and careers. It saves money and marriages.



MORE LISTENING TIPS

- Mentally screen out distractions like background activity and noise. In addition, try not to focus on the speaker's accent or speech mannerisms to the point where they become distractions. Finally, don't be distracted by your own thoughts, feelings, or biases.
- When listening for long stretches, focus on and remember key words and issues.
- When dealing with difficult people, spend more time listening than speaking.
- When in doubt about whether to listen or speak, keep listening.