

Listening to Build Connection

Listening is a way that people of all ages, races, genders, abilities, languages, etc. build connections with each other. Take some time to focus on listening.

The *listener's* job is to listen to their partner in a relaxed way with:

- Attention
- Warmth
- Respect
- Your eyes available* in case your partner looks to see if you are listening (They may not look. Please don't try to make them look. You just want your eyes available in case they do.)

Remember, as you *listen*--

- *You* are important as a listener.
- Your partner is smart.
- Give no advice.
- Maintain confidentiality, no matter how trivial what they are sharing may seem to you.

As a listener you can sit back, relax, and listen with full attention. Don't worry about what you will talk about when it is your turn. And don't interrupt—remember, you will get your turn. In some cultures, insisting on a turn or making eye contact is disrespectful. Eye contact is not required; however, consider that in every culture, young children try to get their adults to listen with their eyes as well as their ears. This is an opportunity to practice talking as if with a child who wants and needs our eye contact.

Later today or tomorrow, notice what happens when you calmly listen without interruption to someone for 5 minutes.

After the time is up, your instructor will ask you to switch roles. With the same partner, the listener is now the talker while the one who was talking becomes the listener. Again the listener relaxes and listens to the one who is talking.

Debrief together--

- How did this focused way of listening differ from your conversation earlier?
- How do you think a small child would respond to being listened to with warm, full attention?