



*Collaborative
Coaching
Solutions,
LLC*

THE INTENTIONAL LEADER

Where intention becomes execution.

The Power of Active Listening

Most leaders think they are listening, but often they are merely hearing the words being spoken. Instead of listening for understanding, they may be waiting to respond, defend, redirect, or listening only for information. They may even be listening through a lens of urgency, pressure, assumptions, or their own experiences. The skill of active listening can be a transformational shift for leadership. Developing this skill requires practice. We live in a world of rapid fire questions and answers where slowing down to listen requires effort and intentionality. I promise you, however, that active listening can mean the difference between a team that is not working and a team that is flourishing.

What is active listening?

Active listening is the intentional practice of giving someone your full attention to understand not only what they are saying but also what they mean so you can respond in a way that builds trust, clarity, and connection. Active listening requires full presence in the moment, empathy and a genuine desire to understand.



What does active listening look like in leadership?

- Remove distractions (cell phones, minimize open tabs on your monitor, find a quiet place)
- Maintain focus (notice body language cues)
- Avoid interrupting
- Listen for emotions (not just facts)
- Summarize what you heard back to them and ask clarifying questions
- Resist the urge to just fix things immediately

What is the ROI of active listening?

The return on investment is not measured on a balance sheet and costs nothing to implement but is valuable in many ways.

- Increased employee engagement - higher productivity, better performance, and morale.
- Trust - greater collaboration and accountability.
- More successful change initiatives-teams are more likely to support change when they feel that their concerns are heard and considered.
- Reduced conflict - less disagreements means less time spent resolving issues.

Reflection Questions

- Do people feel heard after a conversation with you?
- Do you interrupt or mentally prepare yourself to respond while they are still talking?
- Are others comfortable bringing their concerns to you?
- Do you listen to understand or to respond?
- What conversations might improve if you slowed down and became more intentional with your listening?

In your next conversation try this:

- Focus completely on the speaker.
- Do not interrupt.
- Ask one follow up question before giving any answers or advice.
- Summarize what you heard from them before responding.

You may be surprised how much can change when people feel genuinely heard. Creating an environment where people feel safe enough to speak honestly starts with listening.

If your organization is struggling with communication, trust, engagement, or leadership effectiveness, I can help Leadership Coaching and Organizational Development can strengthen the way you connect, communicate, lead and move through change.

Resources:

- Journal of Speech Pathology & Therapy - article “The Art of Active Listening: Unlocking Deeper Connections”
- Sequoia Behavioral Health - article “Active Listening: Why it Matters & How to Master It”
- UC Berkley Exec Ed - article “The Art of Active Listening”