



Effective Communication

This lesson is designed to increase effective communication through the use of active listening and I-Messages.

Essential Question

How do we work together to create a fair and just classroom community where individual and collective learning is engaging, valued, and liberating for all?

Guiding Question

How can being a better listener build relationships, empathy, and trust?

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify the elements of active listening.
- Students will learn and practice active listening skills.
- Students will learn how to use I-Messages to share feelings without escalating conflict.

Advance Preparation

- Prepare a blank “Looks like – Sounds like – Feels like” chart for “Active Listening” on the board or chart paper
- Recruit two students to participate in Role Play (see below)
- Have space in classroom for a connection circle.

Materials/Resources

- PowerPoint slideshow 4.4 (adapt as needed)
- Timer

Student Materials

- Paper for Do Now
- “Steps to Active Listening – Four F’s” handout
- “I-Message Skits” handout

Vocabulary

- Active Listening
- I-Messages

Do Now

3 min.

Slide 1: Students think of someone they enjoy talking to and respond in writing to the question “What qualities about this person make you feel that way?”

Introduction (Framing/Overview)

12 min.

1. Slide 3: Student Dedication (30-60 seconds).
2. Tell students that good listeners are valued but rare. Today’s lesson will focus on active listening and communicating effectively. Briefly review agenda (slide 4).
3. Have students sit in a circle and tell them they will be playing a game that some of them may remember from elementary school called Telephone (slide 5). If any students are familiar with the game, have them explain it to the group.
 - a) To begin, whisper a sentence about listening into one student’s ear.
(Example: “Today we are going to explore the power of listening to others.”)
 - b) The first student whispers what he or she heard in the next student’s ear.
This continues all the way around the circle.
 - c) The last student tells the group what he or she heard.
4. Engage in a quick debrief of the circle by asking questions about what happened to the original message. Record the responses on the board, chart paper or a google document, so that the responses are visible to everyone.
5. Ask students to share their responses to the Do Now (“What qualities about this person make you enjoy talking with them?”). Note answers on chart paper, the board, or a google document.
6. Show slide 7. Call students’ attention to the phrase “Active Listening.” Ask them what they think this phrase means. Click again and ask what active listening looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Record their responses in the chart you have prepared.

Activity 1: Active Listening

15 min.

7. Slide 8: For the first activity of the day, you will model active listening with a teacher-student role play. (Note: be sure to select student participants in advance and explain the activity to them.)

**Teacher
Modeling/
Role Play**

Ask the first student you have selected to approach. The student should try to persuade you to change the grade he or she received on an assignment or test. While the first student is talking, demonstrate poor listening skills. Allow yourself to be distracted by grading papers, rearranging supplies, etc. After a short time, stop

the role play and invite the second student to approach. (The second student should make the same request.) This time, you are a good listener and practice active listening. **Important:** *neither the good-listener teacher nor the poor-listener teacher agrees to change the grade.*

**Whole
Class
Discussion**

8. Discuss the role play with students using the following questions:
 - a) How did you feel about the teacher when she/he demonstrated poor listening skills?
 - b) How did you feel about the teacher when she/he demonstrated good listening skills?
 - c) Even though the teacher refused to change the grade both times, which experience was more frustrating and less affirming? (Students will have felt more frustrated and disrespected when the teacher failed to give them her full attention.)
9. Introduce the Four F's (Focus, Feelings, Facts, and Feedback) of good listening skills (slide 9). Have students follow along as you read the information on the handout, or invite student volunteers to read the various sections. Ask if students have any questions.
10. Now engage students in Active Listening team role plays (slide 10):
 - a) Divide students into teams of three. (If the class does not divide evenly, create one or two groups of four, each with an extra observer.) Tell students that participants will take turns being a speaker, listener, and observer. Students will do two role plays with their groups.
 - b) Have students select one of the topics below (slide ##), or assign each team a topic. Suggested topic include:
 - My answer to a school problem
 - One thing I think the president should do
 - My favorite sports team
 - A funny childhood memory
 - A problem I experienced recently
 - The best thing about my family
 - c) During each role play, the speaker will talk for three minutes. (Use a timer.) During the first role play, the listener will use poor listening skills: interrupting, offering unsolicited advice, and not reflecting back or summarizing what the speaker has

**Team Role
Play**

said. When the timer indicates the end of the three minutes, the observer reports for two minutes on what he or she saw.

- d) Students then rotate roles for the second role play; the speaker becomes the listener, the observer becomes the speaker, etc. During the second role play, the listener is to use the Four F's (Focus, Feelings, Facts, and Feedback) to model good listening skills. After three minutes, the observer reports to the team.
- e) If time permits, use numbered popsicle sticks to randomly select a few teams to report on their role play.
- f) Close this activity with a general discussion, using the following questions.
 - Did you find it challenging to be a good listener?
 - How did you feel when the listener practiced active listening?
 - How did you feel when the listener didn't really pay attention to you?
 - As an observer, did you notice other students' listening skills more than you usually do?
 - Can this help you become a better listener?
 - Do you know any really good listeners?

**Whole
Class
Discussion**

Activity 2: I-Messages

10 min.

11. Display slide 11 and the term "I-Messages." Explain that an I-message tells the listener how you feel. Explain that while using active listening is an important social skill, we must also learn to communicate our feelings in a way that is respectful and does not escalate a conflict. Using I-messages lets people know how we feel without assigning blame. Click to display the three parts of an I-message:

- What I feel ("I feel....")
- What happened (the behavior) ("...when you...")
- The reason ("...because....")

For example, "I feel sad when you don't call me back because that makes me think you don't care about me."

12. Click again and have student pairs create three I-messages, using the three steps above, and share them with the class.
13. Direct students to the I-Message Skits (slide 12). Click once to have students partner read the first skit.

**Direct
Instruction**

**Pair &
Share**

**Partner
Reading**

14. After students read the skit, discuss the following as a class.

- a) Did Cory and Sandy use I-messages?
- b) What was the result? (They did not use I-messages and instead accused each other. This frustrated and angered them both, and escalated the conflict.)
- c) Did Cory and Sandy do anything else that escalated the conflict? (using global statements like “you never” or “you always”; getting a third person involved in the conflict; name-calling, e.g., irresponsible, loser).
- d) How did Sandy feel after hearing Cory’s accusation? (angry and defensive)
- e) How did each of them feel at the end of the conversation?
- f) Did they solve their problem? (Both were frustrated and angry. They probably did not solve their problem.)

**Whole
Class
Discussion**

15. Ask students to partner read the second skit, and then discuss it as a class using the following questions.

- a) Did Cory and Sandy use I-messages? What was the result? (Both used I-messages. They shared honestly how they were feeling, the specific behavior that bothered them, and the result. Sandy was less defensive and they were able to solve the conflict.)
- b) Did they do anything else that escalated the conflict? (No)
- c) What did Sandy do that de-escalated the conflict? (He apologized and took responsibility for his part in the conflict.)
- d) How did Sandy feel after hearing Cory? (He understood how his actions had inadvertently hurt his friend.)
- e) How did each of them feel at the end of the conversation?
- f) Did they solve their problem? (They defused the situation and solved their conflict.)

**Partner
Reading

Whole
Class
Discussion**

Closure

2 min.

16. Exit ticket: Have students share the 4 Fs for active listening or the three elements of I-Messages.

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Steps to Active Listening: Four F's

Active listening takes concentration. You may feel tired after a period of active listening! You can remember the steps to active listening with the four F's: **focus**, **feelings**, **facts**, and **feedback**.



1. Focus on the speaker

- Give your full attention.
- Sit up straight and look at the speaker.
- Ignore or remove other distractions (TV, music, other conversations).
- Don't interrupt. Don't jump ahead mentally to plan your response.

2. Feelings

- Listen for the speaker's feelings as well as facts.
- Pay attention to the speaker's body language—what is he or she saying non-verbally?

3. Facts

- Note any facts that you did not know before.

4. Feedback

- Reflect back what you hear. Paraphrase or restate: "What I hear you saying is...." Or "It sounds like you..." This does not mean that you agree with the speaker—just that you heard him or her.
- Communicate your attention by nodding, saying "uh huh" or "yes" if you understand.
- Ask questions to clarify understanding: "Do you mean you thought...?"
- Summarize the speaker's main points. The speaker then affirms or corrects your perception as necessary.

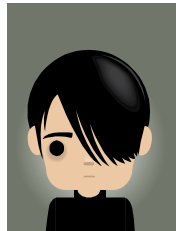


I-Message Skits

Skit 1



Cory: Sandy, what's the matter with you? I called you three times last week to borrow that book you read for English class, and you never even called me back. But I'm always there for you when you need to borrow a basketball or a book or a few dollars. I always call you back. You never even bothered to return my calls, and just ignored me. I told Jamal about it and he thinks you're being a jerk, too. We're both fed up with you. He finally let me borrow his book, so never mind! You are so irresponsible.



Sandy: What are you talking about? You're making a big deal out of nothing. You only called me once, and I was busy and didn't call you back; so what? You always get all worked up about stuff, and I'm tired of it. And what business is it of Jamal's? You shouldn't have dragged him into it, talking about me behind my back like that. What a loser.

Skit 2



Cory: Sandy, I'm feeling pretty upset right now. I called you three times last week to see about borrowing your English book from last year, but you never called me back. I feel like I can't depend on you at all to help me out. But I try hard to be there for you when you need to borrow a book or a few dollars or something. I finally got the book from Jamal. When you don't return my calls I feel really disrespected.



Sandy: Did you really call me three times last week? I guess I wasn't paying enough attention. My mom was sick and had me running errands for her. I'm sorry, I should have called you back. I didn't know it was that important to you. I'm glad you were able to get the book from Jamal.