

ACTIVE LISTENING - CHEAT SHEET

A core element of working in the area of supporting psychological wellbeing and positive mental health is the ability of the adult to allow the young people to talk freely about what is inside their heads. This will be their feelings, their thoughts, their opinions, their unique view of their world.



Remember active listening can be done anywhere- at bedtime, on a walk or whilst doing an activity. This Cheat Sheet gives handy tips for how to be an active listener but the same rules apply not just for children but for adults too. There are a few basic key principles to focus on:

Allow silence take things slowly, don't rush and don't be tempted to fill the silence

Repeat words which the person has said so they know you have "registered" these words- "Let me see if I am understanding this?..."

Do not express judgement or disagreement, just empathy

Notice and show you care - "Are you okay? You seem a little down. Anything you want to talk about?"

Don't minimise the situation or their emotions - "this isn't a big deal" "You are over-reacting, this isn't worth getting upset about."

Validate their feelings - "I can see why you would feel angry about this..."

Help them unpack their feelings by inquiring about their emotions - "Are you feeling frustrated because...?", "It must be so overwhelming to see..., is it?"

Keep your opinions and views out of the conversation as much as possible (for the time being). You can offer advice if you feel necessary but wait until the end of the conversation.

Don't say or imply to look at the bright side, count your blessings or tell them it's all going to be okay, though it may well be, the point is to help them process their experience.

Summarise what you have understood to check out whether you are getting it

WARNING

What not to say

This is nothing compared to...

Typical moody teenager

STOP feeling sorry for yourself

It's not that hard. I thought you could handle it.

Don't worry, it might never happen

→
You think YOU have problems?

Well that's life, when I was your age...

Pull yourself together

What have you got to be depressed about?

