

## Active Listening Exercise

Adapted from Mary Gander, Winona State University

### Purpose

This exercise is designed to help you understand the dynamics of active listening in conversations and to develop active listening skills.

### Instructions

For each of the four vignettes presented below, compose three statements that demonstrative active listening. Specifically:

- **One statement that indicates you show empathy for the situation**
    - Acknowledge feelings
    - Examine body language, tone of voice
    - Let them know you realize they are feeling that emotion by just acknowledging it in a sentence
  
  - **One statement that asks for clarification and detail in a nonjudgmental way**
    - Make a good effort to understand, not push your opinions on them
    - Frame your question as someone trying to understand in more detail
    - Perhaps ask for a specific example
  
  - **One statement that provides nonevaluative feedback**
    - Feed back the message you heard
    - This allows the speaker to determine if he/she really go the message across to you
    - Paraphrase what you heard in your own words
    - Ask if that meaning is what they intended to convey
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### Vignette 1

Your new faculty mentee stops by your office and says, "I really am sick of the department chair. He is just so wishy-washy. Why can't he get tough with some of the slackers around here? They just milk the department, while we all work our butts off. Why doesn't he do something about these people? I know a lot of people like him but he's not as good as they think he is."

- Empathy:
  
- Seek Clarification:
  
- Nonevaluative Feedback:

## **Vignette 2**

Your new faculty mentee stops by your office and his body language shows stress, frustration, and even some fear. You know he has been working hard and has a strong desire to succeed in his pre-tenure years. You are trying to concentrate on some work and have had a number of interruptions already. He just abruptly interrupts you and says, "This interdisciplinary grant proposal is turning out to be a mess. Why can't the other faculty just quit fighting?"

- Empathy:
- Seek Clarification:
- Nonevaluative Feedback:

## **Vignette 3**

Your new faculty mentee is working on an important curriculum revision with other committee members. She has good attention to detail and was selected for the important committee because of that. Appearing quite agitated, her voice is loud and strained and her face has a look of bewilderment. She says, "I'm supposed to be working with four other people from this department on this revision but they never listen to my ideas and seem to hardly know that I'm at the meeting!"

- Empathy:
- Seek Clarification:
- Nonevaluative Feedback:

## **Vignette 4**

Your new faculty mentee comes into your office in a state of agitation and asks if he can talk to you. He sits down calmly and does not have an angry look on his face; however, he says, "It seems like you are avoiding me. I rarely get a chance to talk to you and whenever I try you are either too busy or seem uninterested. Should I get a different mentor?"

- Empathy:
- Seek Clarification:
- Nonevaluative Feedback: