

First Week Day 4:

Listening with Understanding and Empathy

Purpose

Prepare an active listening anchor chart.

Empathy is a necessity. Successful circles thrive on empathy. It may be one of the best tools we have for creating a future of adult decision makers who operate with the concerns and plights of others truly at heart. Practice in empathy is a precious gift to give to our students. We don't have to be living each other's lives to feel what they may be experiencing.

There are many components to empathy. Today, we will be practicing empathy through active listening. Read this article from Edutopia that points to not only this strategy, but also a couple other things to consider for future circles.

Teacher Work

Explain to students that today we're going to practice listening to one another by repeating what we've heard to show that we've really heard it. It sounds easy, but we aren't usually aware of how hard it is to really be listening.

Have a student tell what his or her favorite color is and then pass the talking piece to the next person to speak. The next person to speak repeats what the first person said and then adds what his or her favorite color is. That person passes to a third person to speak who repeats only what the person right before him - the second person - said and adds what his or her favorite color is. **Only the previous color is repeated – this is not a memory game.**

If students forget what the person before them said or start to tell their favorite colors without first repeating what they have just heard, gently point it out and ask them to try again. I was always surprised at how hard this can be.

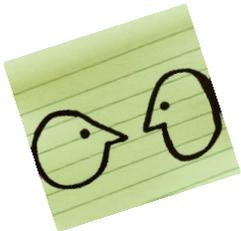
Continue with other statements such as, "On Saturday, I like to .."

Share with them the active listening skills...

Active Listening Checklist

1. Focus on the person who is speaking.
2. Show by your tone of voice, your friendly expression, and your shoulders squared that you are interested and want to be helpful.
3. Don't interrupt.
4. Accept the person's feelings without judgment.
5. Repeat what the person has said to be sure you understand.

"When we listen like this, it opens up our mind and our hearts to what the other person is sharing. It is not about if you agree, it is the effort to truly understand the other person. Feeling with someone based on what they share is called empathy."



Student Work

You might want to make this a two day long lesson or even practice multiple times throughout the first weeks so that students get a continual reminder of how to actively listen.

Explain that students are going to practice paraphrasing by working with a partner. One person will talk about a topic you suggest and the other will paraphrase. You will keep time.

A. Divide the class into pairs. Using a topic from below, have one person talk for one minute and have his or her partner paraphrase.

Tell a story about a strong feeling you've been having lately.

Explain about someone that is really important to you.

B. Have the pairs give each other feedback. Ask the people who did the paraphrasing to tell their partners what it was like for them to do this. Did they have trouble listening? Did they have trouble remembering what they heard? How did they feel about the experience? Then have the people who did the talking say what it was like for them to have their partner listen and paraphrase.

C. Switch roles and repeat. You could choose different questions for the second round so first round students are not rehearsing their responses.

Closing

Pass around the talking piece and ask for reactions. How did it feel to listen this carefully? How did it feel to be heard?

Active listening is a vital piece of solving problems in a restorative way. I bring this lesson back up again and again during small conflicts between students. A great way to disarm an argument is to practice this active listening pattern.

Resources

This lesson is from Morning Side Center. We'll talk more about resources on this site in future posts.

<https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/talking-it-out-restorative-conversation>

