

Be a better listener



At **Include** we love to **talk**, **sing and sign** with each other. We also try to work on our **listening skills**, whether we are online or in person.



We share stories and find out what happens at people's work, hobbies or home. It can be funny things, surprising things and even sad things. We listen to them all.



Our member **Josh helped** us with this resource. He is a really good listener. We hope these tips will **help** show you **how** to be a **good listener** – or an even better one!



Have you heard about **The Big Listen?** On **24th July each year**, Samaritans raise awareness of their <u>24 hour</u>, <u>7 days</u> <u>a week listening service</u> and also encourage people to become better listeners.

This guide is based partly on Samaritans' SHUSH listening tips. You can learn more on their website at <u>samaritans.org/shush</u>



How to be a more active listener: Show that you care



When someone is talking to you, it is important to pay attention and show that you are listening. Make sure your phone is away. Try to see each other's face and hands, especially if signing is used.



When you're having a chat pay attention to **body language** and **facial expressions –** what is this communicating?



Try not to **interrupt** or tell your **own story** when you're **being spoken** to. **Wait** until the other person is **finished** and ready to **move on**.



Listen carefully so that you **learn at least** one new thing about the person something that helps you get to know them better. **Try to remember** it.



Be patient



Try not to **rush** the **conversation**. This can

Its important that the other person trusts

you not to judge or make fun of them -

just to listen.

make the person feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

It is also **important** <u>not</u> to **assume** how the other person is **feeling**, or make them **think** their feelings are **wrong**.

They **don't** have to **answer** all the **questions** that you ask. They might **choose** to answer them **later on**.

Sometimes if people have **stopped talking** they are **processing** what you have said, or **thinking** about **what** they want to **say** back. A **pause** can be good – try to feel comfortable with it.



Adapt your question style





You may need to **vary your style of questions** depending on who you are listening to, or what mood they are in. Work out **which approach helps** the person express themselves.

Sometimes offering a **closed question**, that leads to a simple '**yes**' or '**no**' answer will **build trust** and get the conversation going. You can then **ask** them to **tell you more**.

Open ended questions can be good but might take some people **longer** to **think** about. Its **important not to rush** the person you're taking to.

Some people struggle to answer open questions and need you to offer you a **choice of possible answers** (maximum 2 or 3).



Some people will benefit from having **objects / pictures or symbols** to help them express themselves - as finding the right words can be very difficult.



Say it back



Repeat back what the person **said** to you to make sure you **understood** what they've told you.

Try not to give any advice or tell someone what to do, unless they ask. This can be hard sometimes especially if you are trying to help.





Understand

The **person** will know you were **listening** and **paying attention** if you are able to **go back over back** what they said. Try to **summarise in your own words** so people know you have really understood and aren't just copying their words.

You can run through their main points to **check** you haven't **misunderstood** or **forgotten** anything.



Have courage



If you find it hard at first that's ok, don't give up. It's ok if you don't know what to say, you can be quiet and think as well.

At first it can be **difficult** to **ask** people **how** they are **feeling** but it will get **easier** the more you do it.



Some people **don't like** to talk about their **feelings** and that's ok too. If you are **friendly**, they might **come back** and **talk** to you when they are **ready**.



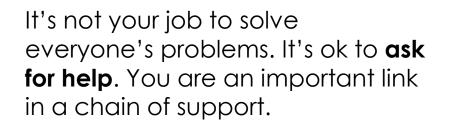
There are **loads** of people out there that are willing to **listen** to **you** as well. No one is **alone**.



Know when to ask for help



ETHIS CARE?



You can **suggest** where the person might find the **right support**, or you can **ask** someone else - if you have **permission**.

If, while listening to someone, you think they, or someone else could be in danger, make sure you tell someone who can help, (even if the person you have listened to asks you not to).



You can find out more about safeguarding <u>here</u>. Professional organisations and charities should have someone who leads on keeping people safe. You can ask who that is.



Set yourself a goal



Becoming a **better listener** can help you support **loved ones**. It can also help **improve your relationships** with **family, friends**, and **colleagues**.



This guide has covered lots of things. Start with a small change. Could you decide to do one of these things:

- Listen without being distracted
- Listen without interrupting
- Check in with loved ones more often and ask them how they really are



- Wait your turn when chatting in a big group
- Be patient and ask further questions if needed
- Repeat back what has been said to check understanding.