

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!

July 24

Have you heard about **The Big Listen?**On **24**th **July each year**, Samaritans raise awareness of their <u>24 hour</u>, <u>7 days</u> a <u>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 samaritans.org/shush



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



Its **important** that the other person **trusts** you **not** to **judge** or **make fun** of them – just to **listen**.



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



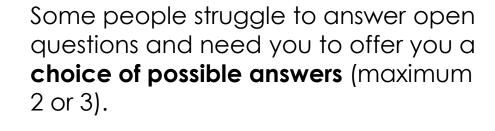
You may need to vary your style of questions depending on who you are listening to, or what mood they are in. Work out which approach helps the person express themselves.



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 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**.



The person will know you were listening and paying attention if you are able to go back over 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.

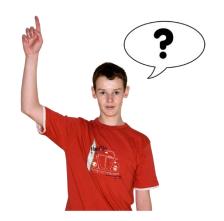
Understand



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



It's not your job to solve everyone's problems. It's ok to ask for help. You are an important link in a chain of support.



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 here. 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.