# Communication & Self-Management

## Listening Skills

## Giving and Receiving Feedback

### Executive Summary

*Listening Skills*

Listening is an essential skill for any supervisor, since it is essential for creating a trust relationship, getting necessary input for understanding what problems look like at the front lines, and reducing miscommunication.

Tips for effective listening

1. Create a listening container.

Depending on the intensity and privacy of the conversation, you may need to create a strong container for the conversation. Consider:

* Privacy
* Freedom from Distractions
* How much time you will need
* Ground rules, which can include:
  + Confidentiality
  + Each person making “I” statements rather than jumping to judge or label the other person.
  + Avoiding name calling or pejorative language
  + Not interrupting the speaker
  + Keeping voice volume and gestures at a moderate level
  + Allowing for time outs

1. Adopting a listening stance

As the listener, you want to help the other person share as much information as possible about the topic of discussion. Here are some tips:

* Minimal encouragements
  + Echo words and phrases the other person uses
  + Use verbal cues that show you are listening
  + Ask “Is there more about that?”
  + Silence. Often people will feel uncomfortable with silence and share more information on their own.
* Ask open ended questions
  + Open ended questions encourage the speaker to explore the whole landscape of the topic
  + Cannot be answered “yes” or “no”
  + Beware of advice posing as a question:   
    “Have you considered doing x?”
* Make mirroring statements
  + Mirroring statements are statements that summarize what the other person has said.
  + They help the other person know you understand what you are saying and give them an opportunity to clarify
  + Follow mirroring statements with “Have I got that right?”
* Make empathic statements
  + Empathic statements are a **guess** about what the other person is feeling.
  + They demonstrate concern and respect for the person’s feelings
  + Follow empathic statements with “Am I right about that?”
  + Don’t be afraid to show curiosity about emotions.
  + With sincerity, validate feelings:  
    “That makes sense to me.”

*Giving Feedback*

1. General Principles

* Our brains are wired to notice what’s wrong
* Train yourself to provide positive feedback
* Feedback works best when it is:
  + Immediate
  + Specific
  + Behavioral
  + Supportive

1. Positive feedback.

* Describe the specific behaviors the person took, and the impact they had.

1. Constructive feedback.

* Directive feedback. Describe the specific behaviors that are problematic, the impact they have had, and describe a positive future in which the person changes their behavior and creates a better result.
* Non-directive feedback.
  + Use behavior + impact to describe what you are seeing
  + Ask if they have additional information you should know. Listen.
  + Ask them for their interpretation. Listen.
  + Ask questions to ensure they are taking ownership of the problem.
  + Brainstorm solutions, negotiate, set a time to check in on progress.

*Receiving Feedback*

1. Adopt a listening stance  
   See above for details
2. Ask questions to:

* Help them focus on specific behaviors, their impact, and the changes in behavior they would like to see.
* Come to a clear negotiated agreement about what you may do differently
* Set up a time to check in on progress

### Who to Call

**Kevin Thomas**

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For 1:1 coaching on listening skills and giving & receiving feedback.

**Danielle Gonzalez**

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For guidance on feedback where formal disciplinary action may be necessary.

**E4health Total Leadership Support**

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For confidential support with resolving communication challenges with your staff.