



H - Honour your limits. Even though you are supporting another person through active listening, it is important to remember that you are allowed to have firm boundaries and limitations. If you can't support someone because what they're saying is triggering for you, **that's okay!** Practice how to gently state your boundaries and refer someone to other resources/active listeners. Additionally, it is important to practice good self care after supporting someone, you deserve to prioritize your needs.

E - Echo their sentiments. A great way to show someone you're listening is to repeat a summary of what they've said back to them. A great way to do this is to start by saying "what I'm hearing you say is, and correct me if I'm wrong..." or "it sounds like you're saying this...is that correct?" Be careful not to ascribe feelings or emotions to people's words or experiences. The point here is to make sure you're both on the same page, not to tell them how to feel.

A - Affirm and validate. Validation feels good. When practicing active listening let the person you're supporting know that the way they're feeling is valid and understandable. Phrases like "I believe you" or "feeling that way is normal" or "you're allowed to feel that way" can be really helpful in letting someone know their feelings are normal and okay.

R - Reserve judgements and opinions. This is often the hardest part of active listening. Remember that you are there to support someone by listening to them and not by giving advice or weighing in on the situation. Even though you may feel strongly about something, it is not the job of an active listener to give an opinion or express that opinion through facial expressions, body language, etc.

S - Space and body language. We don't just listen with our ears, we listen with our whole body. Be aware of your facial expressions and body language, and make sure they are coming across as non-judgmental and welcoming. Be aware of the space you take up and try not to block the exits or stand over someone. Remember never to touch someone without their expressed, enthusiastic consent, especially when you are supporting them through a difficult time.



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE



H.E.A.R.S.

HOW TO PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is a useful tool in supporting someone who is going through a difficult time or is feeling triggered. Here are some helpful tips on how practice active listening. Remember, a good active listener is someone who H.E.A.R.S. what the other person is saying.

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