

## Empathetic Listening

**Purpose:** To develop an understanding of the importance of active listening.

**Instructions:**

1. Find a partner, then move to a place where you can talk comfortably. Designate one person as **A** and the other **B**.
2. Find a subject on the list below on which you and your partner apparently disagree, or you may select a current events topic, a philosophical or moral issue, or perhaps simply a matter of personal taste.
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Abortion</li> <li>B. Death Penalty</li> <li>C. Single Parenting</li> <li>D. Teenage Pregnancy</li> <li>E. Homosexuality</li> <li>F. Euthanasia</li> <li>G. Education Standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H. Drug/Alcohol Abuse—How to prevent their use</li> <li>I. Internet Regulation</li> <li>J. Cohabitation</li> <li>K. Divorce/Children</li> <li>L. Prison Reform</li> <li>M. Other . . .</li> </ul>
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3. **A** begins by making a statement of the subject. **B**'s job is then to paraphrase the idea back, beginning by saying something like, "What I hear you saying is . . ." It is very important that in this step **B** feeds back only what he/she heard **A** say without adding any judgment or interpretation. **B**'s job is simply to understand here, and doing so in no way should signify agreement or disagreement with **A**'s remarks.
4. **A** then responds by telling **B** whether or not his or her response was accurate. If there was some misunderstanding, **A** should make the correction and **B** should feed back his/her new understanding of the statement. Continue this process until you are both sure that **B** understands **A**'s statement.
5. Now it is **B**'s turn to respond to **A**'s statement, and for **A** to help the process of understanding by correcting **B**.
6. Continue this process until each partner is satisfied that he/she has explained himself/herself fully and has been understood by the other person.

### Discussion

As a listener, how accurate was your first understanding of the speaker's statements?

How did your understanding of the speaker's position change after you used active listening?

(continued)

3. Did you find that the gap between your position and that of your partner narrowed as a result of your both using active listening?

4. How did you feel at the end of your conversation? How does this feeling compare to your usual emotional state after discussing controversial issues with others?

5. How might your life change if you used active listening at home, at work, or with friends?