



## Module 3

### Handout 1: Active Listening Tips

Listening is an essential skill. We use it constantly in nearly every aspect of our life, yet despite all the practice, we are not very good at it! Much research has been carried out that shows that it is not only what we say but the way that we say it. Many people use the 7-38-55 rule to underline this:

words = 7% of what we remember  
tone of voice = 38%,  
facial expression = 55%

While this is over-simplifies what the originator of this theory (Albert Mehrabian) meant, it does help to illustrate the importance of paying close attention to the speaker's body language and tone as well as their words – in other words, 'active listening'. The more you practise, the better you become at it.

Here are some tips to help you stay focused on what someone is saying:

- Focus on the person not what they are wearing, what you are having dinner or any other distractions.
- Listen to them rather than plan how you are going to reply while they are speaking
- If it is hard to concentrate, try repeating their words to yourself
- Encourage them by nodding and giving verbal cues such as “uh, huh ...”
- Check your understanding by reflecting back what they are saying e.g. “sounds as if you’re saying ...”
- Look at the speaker directly and pay attention to their body language as well as your own....
- ...BUT, remember potential cultural differences e.g. in some cultures, direct eye contact is considered rude or aggressive.
- Always be respectful and honest. Active listening is not about agreeing with the speaker but it is about fully hearing them and offering an authentic respectful.

