



Office of Student Leadership & Service



“Leadership Lifesavers To-Go” Series

Leadership Lifesavers To-Go is an ongoing outreach effort to students at Emory University from the Office of Student Leadership & Service and is a supplement to our ongoing leadership development series. These brief & informative “tid-bits” are intended to serve as guides and are not intended to be all-inclusive.

ACTIVE LISTENING

In our active world of communication, one cannot afford to exclude the art of listening. As leaders, we must listen to our constituents in order to be effective. Thus, we need to listen and correctly understand all messages from all our organizational members.

“Your Hear Me, But Are You Listening?”

Active listening differs from hearing. Hearing is the act of perceiving audible sounds with the ear and is a passive act. Listening, on the other hand, is the active pursuit of understanding what another person is saying and feeling.

“Hear What I Have to Say.”

In active listening, the receiver tries to understand what the sender is feeling and what the message means. The listener puts his/her understanding into his/her own words and feeds it back to the sender for verification. It is important to feed back only what the listener feels the sender's message meant, nothing more, nothing less. This creates an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding in which the sender can explore the problem and determine a solution.

Here are some suggestions that can accentuate your listening skills:

- Have relaxed but attentive posture and comfortable eye contact.
- Convey a sense of welcome, acceptance, and respect.
- Listen for associated feelings as well as content. Focusing on the facts of the problem alone may cause you to miss the feelings that are expressed or implied.
- Let the person speak and ventilate his/her thoughts and feelings by offering leads of "door openings" to talk.
- Reflect, clarify and paraphrase what the person has said in order to confirm that you have heard it as the person meant it.
- Ask questions to get information that seems pertinent in order to get a clear and concise understanding of the problem.
- Be empathetic.
- Be actively supportive and encouraging.