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STUDENT-STAFF COLLABORATIVE RESOURCES

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ACTIVE LISTENING

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OVERVIEW

ACTIVITY



OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

These cards have been designed to help groups and individuals prepare for partnership working. Developing useful communication and interpersonal skills that can foster partnership working that is respectful and enjoyable. Through reflection and discussion using 6 active listening statements, this resource aims to develop mindfulness of individuals' conduct with others, challenge the barriers to listening, and develop sensitivity and attentiveness to fellow partners.

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ACTIVITY

Step 1: In a group or pair, share out the active listening statements and each person takes a turn to read their statement. Pause to discuss the ideas that the statement is

presenting, reflect on your own experiences, and use discussion to decide how, as a group or pair, you might factor this advice into the conversation.

Inclusive Practice: Be mindful of different thinking, listening and learning styles. Ask everyone if they are comfortable reading and discussing aloud. If anyone's reaction is reluctant – is there another way this could be done? Or, offer more time to digest the information, perhaps it would work better by discussing in pairs and feeding back.

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Step 2: Following the card activity:

For groups of 3 or more people:

1. Identify who has become the natural 'leader' in this meeting. Who brought the card activity along? Who is coordinating the partnership?
2. This person could proceed by 'gifting' their leadership role to another person, for this meeting/ conversation. Check with the others, would anyone else be prepared to lead the discussions on this occasion?
3. Is there anyone in the group willing to document the key points, or audio record? Check that everyone is willing to give their permission.

For pairs:

1. Identify who has become the natural 'leader' in this meeting. Who brought the card activity along? Who is coordinating the partnership?
2. Spend a couple of minutes discussing this dynamic. What does this role of leadership mean for the partnership? Could there be a delegation of tasks to each partner, to promote clearer roles and responsibilities?
3. How, as a pair, will you keep notes or document key points, whilst maintaining active listening that builds trust, rapport, and equality in the partnership?

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ACTIVE LISTENING STATEMENTS - to be read at the start of the partnership

1. Take a moment to plan for active listening.

We are often keen to jump straight in to partnership conversations, to discuss the content of the project ahead. These cards will enable us to take a few minutes to think and talk about how we want this conversation to unfold.

The cards will also introduce us to the role of active listening, and how this can help everyone who is part of the project to be attentive, reflective, and sensitive to fellow partners.

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ACTIVE LISTENING STATEMENTS - to be read at the start of the partnership

2. Advice for everyone: prepare yourself to listen.

Being attentive to other people while they are talking requires being focused and relaxed. We can easily be distracted by other thoughts: what's for dinner tonight, have I fed the cat, what time is my train?

Try to put these thoughts aside for this short meeting time, and concentrate on what others are saying. Never interrupt someone or finish their sentence, be patient.

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3. Be mindful of different thinking styles.

Some people find it easy to process information, then rattle off an immediate response – this takes a conversation into a fast pace.

Other people like time to listen, digest, and think about what is being proposed. Some people definitely need allocated thinking time to write their responses down, or come back to you with their thoughts at a later meeting. Be mindful of others' needs, ask them how they might like to proceed.

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ACTIVE LISTENING STATEMENTS - to be read at the start of the partnership

4. Put your fellow speakers at ease.

When someone else is talking, let them know you are listening, and hearing what they are saying. Use open body language, gestures, or words to encourage them to continue. Maintain eye contact (but don't stare!), smile.

Try to remove distractions such as shuffling papers, mobile phones, noisy equipment. Don't make unnecessary notes, doodles, etc. if you are worried about how to remember what is being said, could you audio record, or could someone else take notes?

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ACTIVE LISTENING STATEMENTS - to be read at the start of the partnership

5. Be mindful of some barriers.

It is common that, when we are listening to others, we are often formulating our response while the person is still talking. This is a barrier to attentively listening to all that is being said.

The risks are that assumptions are made, conclusions are drawn, inaccurate or incomplete information can then lead to misunderstandings. Listening is a skill that requires constant refining; so use this experience to begin to become aware of your own thought processes while listening.

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6. Keep an open mind.

Our ideals, values and beliefs can dominate our thoughts, without us being aware sometimes. It can be difficult to attentively listen to others when their views contradict our opinions.

Try to become aware of when this is happening, acknowledge your own reactions, but then get back to listening and trying to understand what is being said. Avoid jumping in with 'advice' for the speaker, before they have finished, and particularly when they are not asking for advice or posing a problem.