



Interactive Exercise: Active Listening that Enhances Belonging

Objective: This exercise aims to enhance participants' active listening skills to create a more inclusive environment, where all members feel heard and valued.

Duration: 60 minutes

Introduction:

- Welcome participants and explain the importance of inclusivity in the NATS.
- You could start by displaying or reading NATS's Inclusion and Diversity Statement.
- Emphasize the role of active listening in fostering a supportive and respectful environment.
- Set ground rules for the exercise, encouraging open communication and a safe space for discussions.

Part 1: Understanding Active Listening

- Define active listening: Explain that active listening involves fully concentrating on, understanding, responding to, and remembering what the speaker is saying.
- Active listeners:
 - o pay attention
 - o refrain from interrupting
 - o summarize
 - o maintain eye contact
 - o show interest
 - o request clarification
 - o use positive body language
 - o paraphrase
 - o withhold judgment
 - o show empathy
 - o repeat key phrases
 - o share
- Discuss the barriers to active listening, such as distractions, assumptions, and personal biases.
- Encourage participants to share their experiences and challenges with active listening in diverse settings.

Part 2: Empathy and Perspective-Taking

- Highlight the connection between empathy and active listening.
- Conduct an activity: Divide participants into pairs. One partner will share a personal experience related to diversity or inclusivity, and the other partner must actively listen without interrupting.
- After the sharing, the active listener will summarize the main points of the story to demonstrate their understanding.

Part 3: Identifying Biases and Assumptions

- Raise awareness of unconscious biases and assumptions that may hinder inclusive communication.

- Share scenarios related to diversity and inclusion, and ask participants to identify potential biases and assumptions present in the conversations.
- Facilitate a group discussion on strategies to recognize and overcome these biases when engaging in active listening.

Part 4: The L.E.A.R.N. Model for Active Listening

Introduce the L.E.A.R.N. model as a practical tool for active listening in diverse environments:

1. L: Listen Actively

- Stress the importance of giving undivided attention to the speaker.
- Use verbal cues like nodding and affirmations to show engagement.

2. E: Elicit Thoughts and Feelings

- Encourage open-ended questions to allow speakers to express their emotions and perspectives.
- Highlight the significance of paraphrasing and asking for clarification to ensure understanding.

3. A: Avoid Assumptions

- Remind participants to refrain from making assumptions based on appearance or background.
- Emphasize the value of suspending judgment until the speaker has fully shared their thoughts.

4. R: Reflect on the Message

- Teach reflective listening techniques, such as summarizing and restating key points.
- Encourage participants to reflect on their emotional reactions and potential biases during conversations.

5. N: Never Interrupt

- Stress the importance of allowing the speaker to express themselves fully without interruptions.
- Discuss the impact of interruptions on inclusivity and trust.

Part 5: Role-Play Exercise

- Divide participants into groups of three: Speaker, Active Listener, and Observer.
- Assign different scenarios that involve diversity-related topics or workplace situations.
- Allow each group to practice active listening using the L.E.A.R.N. model.
- After each role-play, have the observer provide feedback on the active listening skills demonstrated.

Conclusion:

- Recap the key points of the exercise, emphasizing the role of active listening in fostering inclusivity.
- Encourage members to implement the L.E.A.R.N. model in their daily interactions.
- Encourage members to access NATS's I.D.E.A. Toolkit for ongoing learning on diversity and inclusivity.

Remember that the success of this exercise depends on creating a safe and open environment where members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. The goal is to encourage empathy and understanding while promoting active listening as a fundamental skill for an inclusive environment.