

True listening is an art form and a gift. When you actively listen to someone you give them the freedom, space, and support to think.

When we focus our attention on listening for the sole purpose of understanding, we can choose to concentrate entirely on what the other person is saying and let go of any need to interject, correct, or reply.

‘The quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first. The quality of our thinking depends on the way we treat each other while we are thinking.’

Nancy Kline

The worksheets have been designed so you can do them alone or work with others, this guide will show you some ways you can support and encourage each other to deepen your thinking and in turn, your understanding.

Rule of engagement!

If we are to open up to someone, we need to feel safe. It can be pretty scary sharing our stories, we can feel vulnerable and if we don’t feel safe, we may be guarded about what we say. If this happens, we prevent quality thinking.

To ensure the right environment ground rules are helpful.

Place	Find a place where you won’t be interrupted or concerned about someone listening in to your conversation
No judgement	As the listener, you are not going to pass judgement on whether you think something is good or bad, right or wrong – try and tell this to your face too, you don’t want to distract your partner!
Eye contact	This doesn’t mean stare at your partner! It means, gently hold their space with your eyes. When they look up or at you, it is helpful for them to see you looking engaged and interested – this should be natural not forced!
Time	Don’t rush your partner to the end of a sentence or question, let them tell you when they have thought it through enough. Contract with each other about who will speak first, this way you can feel comfortable that everyone will get a turn. It could be helpful to agree what time you have available for this conversation
Note taking	For these worksheets, it might be helpful for the person doing the listening also to take some notes. This means the person thinking doesn’t have to stop their flow to write something down. You can recap after each question to check you’ve captured things correctly. This is another opportunity to add information if required.
Empathy	To show empathy is to show that you can appreciate what someone may be telling you about how they felt. It is different from sympathy, where you feel sad on behalf of someone.

Notice body language

Does their face light up at certain parts of a conversation? If it does, when appropriate mention that and ask them for more information about it, a nice way to do this is;

- ✿ I noticed that when you talked about your last trip home you had a really big smile on your face. What was it specifically about that trip that you enjoyed so much?

With this example, you are demonstrating that you are listening with your ears and eyes, you are fully engaged with the other person and that will feel good for both of you.

Do more of this!	Do less or none of this!
Use words like 'what' and 'how'; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ What do you remember about that day? ✿ How did it make you feel? ✿ What specifically upset or excited you? 	Try not to ask questions that produce a closed answer such as; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Did you like it? ✿ Where did that happen? ✿ How much was it?
Ask questions like; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Tell me more ✿ Is there anything else? ✿ When else have you experienced this? 	Limit your speaking part and avoid; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Interrupting ✿ Correcting ✿ Suggestions (unless asked for them)
You know what it looks and feels like when someone is interested in what you are saying; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Gentle nodding ✿ Smile ✿ Sit up straight 	You know how it looks and feels when someone seems disinterested or objectional in what you are saying; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✿ Frowning ✿ Pulling faces ✿ Fidgeting

When to offer advice

It is a good idea to check with someone first if they would like your advice before you offer it. A nice way to do this might be;

- ✿ If you would like to hear it, I could share how I have dealt with a similar situation/person in the past that has worked well for me

Remember – you are not 'counselling' your partner, you are listening!

Show appreciation

Someone listening to you is a gift, as is being trusted to listen. Saying thank you is a nice way to close the conversation.