

## Active Listening

Active listening involves focusing on the student speaking to you in order to understand what he or she is saying. By listening carefully, you are able to show the student you have understood what he/she has said and allows the student the opportunity to provide more information if necessary.

Active listening involves all of the following (Aussie Optimism Module 3, p. 35; Fletcher, Furin, Robers & Oates, 1997; Egan 1994; Egan 1998):

1. Focusing on key and relational words, e.g. what the student is saying is happening to him or her.
2. Paraphrasing or summarising the key ideas in what the student's has said, e.g. "So what you're saying is...."
3. Asking for clarification or more information if you are unsure of what the student is saying or require more information e.g. "Is there anything more?"
4. Using prompts that encourage the other person to continue speaking, e.g. nod, smile, verbal prompts such as "ah ha" or "I see" etc.
5. Displaying non-verbal behaviour that lets the other person know you are paying attention to what they are saying. The acronym "SOLER" (Egan, 1998, p.16) is a useful way to remember the non-verbal behaviour important to consider when speaking to students:

**S** Sit or stand so you are facing the student **SQUARELY**  
**O** Maintain an **OPEN** or interested posture  
**L** **LEAN** toward the student when they are speaking  
**E** Maintain **EYE CONTACT** without staring  
**R** Remain **RELAXED** during the conversation

References:

Aussie Optimism, Module 3 "Communication Skills", Curtin University of Technology: Bentley.

Egan, G. (1994). The Skilled Helper: A Problem-Management Approach to Helping. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company: Pacific Grove, California.

Egan, G. (1998). Exercises in Helping Skills: A Manual to Accompany the Skilled Helper 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company: Pacific Grove, California.

Fletcher, J., Fruin, D.J., Roberts, C., & Oates, S. (1997). Resource Book for Basic Processes in Interviewing: An Australian resource for those involved in teaching counselling and interviewing skills. Department of Psychology, University of Western Australia & Department of Psychology, Curtin University of Technology: Perth