

Top Tips For

LISTENING

So You Really Hear

At the moment many people are struggling. When they talk to you, make sure you really hear them.

- 1.** If it is worth listening, it is worth stopping what you're doing and giving someone your full attention, one-on-one. Yes, some people prefer to avoid focused face to face conversation, that's fine. Side by side listening while in the car or peeling potatoes or walking on the beach works too.
- 2.** When someone starts to confide in you, don't promise that you won't tell anyone. If you find out that person is going to harm themselves or someone else, you are obliged to tell someone who can help. Let them know you are on their side but don't make promises you can't keep.
- 3.** Pay attention. Most advice on listening will tell you to have open body language and nod and reflect back. The fact is, you don't have to remember to smile and nod to show you're paying attention, when you are actually paying attention!
- 4.** Try not to interrupt, let them tell their whole story. Often in talking, people come to their own understandings of what is happening and what they need to do.
- 5.** Allow pauses. Often, we feel as though we have to fill dead air. We don't. Just wait, people need thinking time.
- 6.** If you need to ask a question, choose open-ended questions. What was that like? How did that feel? Simple questions elicit more detailed answers.
- 7.** Avoid equating your experiences with those of the person speaking. All experiences are individual. It is not about you, so when someone tells you their story don't then jump in with something similar that happened to you. This is about connection and empathy. It isn't about you.
- 8.** As you listen, let ideas come into your head and let them go out. Don't grab an idea and hold onto it, waiting for your chance to say it out loud. Let those ideas waft through, but keep listening, that way you will remain present.
- 9.** Make sure you understand what is being communicated to you rather than assuming you do. Clarify meaning.