



Listening and Asking Clarifying Questions

PCL Module 6

Objectives



- Define the importance of listening and asking clarifying questions in collaborative teaming settings
- Demonstrate the ability to use the skills of listening and asking clarifying questions in role play situations

Essential Questions



- *How do you define “effective listening” and “asking clarifying questions”?*
- *How can effective use of the skills of listening and asking clarifying questions contribute to collaborative team development?*
- *In what ways might you improve your own skills in listening and asking clarifying questions?*

Agenda



- Think, pair, share: *Importance of listening and asking clarifying questions skills to the development of collaboration.* (10 minutes)
- Activity: *Developing examples of effective skills in listening, and clarifying questions (15 minutes)*
- Activity in triads: *Role play using the skills of listening, summarizing and asking clarifying questions (35 minutes)*

Think, Pair, Share



- Begin by thinking about the definitions of these two skills:
 - Listening
 - Asking clarifying questions
- Share your definitions with a partner.
- Once you have agreed to common definitions for each, talk about their importance for good communication and collaboration.
- Share your definitions and rationale with the large group.

Activity: What is Listening?



- Go back to your “think, pair, share” partner to generate ideas about listening. Jot down your answers to the following questions:
 - What is a good listener doing when he or she is really listening?
 - What does the speaker experience when someone is really listening to him or her?
- Share your ideas with the whole group

Activity: What Are Some Examples of Asking Clarifying Questions?



- With your same partner, generate 5 – 7 examples of clarifying questions that can be used to help bring out additional information on a topic, clarify how someone feels about a topic, or further explain a complex idea.
- Share your ideas with the whole group

Role Play Activity: Listening and Asking Clarifying Questions



- Goal: To demonstrate the ability to engage in active listening and asking clarifying questions
- Participants and roles:
 - 1 “story teller”
 - 1 listener
 - 1 observer

Role Play Directions



- 1. Tell the story:** The story teller chooses a situation and talks about it for 2 - 3 minutes. During this time, the listener listens to the story teller, asking clarifying questions as needed to help make details and feelings clearer for both the story teller and the listener. The observer's role is to observe the interaction, especially the listener's ability to convey a sense of listening to the story teller and to clarify the information that is being shared.
- 2. Summarize the story:** When the story teller is finished, the listener summarizes the story, asking additional clarifying questions if necessary.
- 3. Reflect on the interactions:** The observer shares his/her reflections on the interaction, including positive and negative feedback for the listener. The story teller comments as to her/his feelings about the degree to which the listener seemed to be listening to the story and was able to capture the main points of the story in an accurate, non-judgmental way.
- 4. Repeat** until all participants have had a chance to be the listener.

Story #1 (Feel free to elaborate!)



- You (**the story-teller**) are the parent of a child in kindergarten. You see your son as extremely capable in an academic sense and very creative. He can be a bit of a “loner” and has been described by others as being “too emotional,” but in your eyes, he just needs time to mature. Unfortunately, your son has not yet formed any friendships at school. He often cries at home, telling you how other kids tease him on the playground and never include him in any games. You’ve tried to talk to his teacher once, but she gave you the impression that it’s not her job to find friends for your son. You’re upset and angry, and you’re thinking about bringing the issue to the principal. You are pretty emotional as you tell your friend (**the listener**) about what’s going on.

Tips for the Listener in Story #1



- As the **listener**, focus on what your friend is saying, and be prepared to ask clarifying questions so that you can identify her main concerns. Begin your summarizing statement by saying something like: “I can tell that you are really upset. Let me see if I can get this right: You are most concerned about...”

Story #2



1. You are a parent volunteer (**the story-teller**) who was asked yesterday to fill in for another parent volunteer in a fifth grade class taught by Mr. Jensen. You were present in Mr. Jensen's class for over an hour helping to support Dan, who has many learning needs and a fragile sense of self-esteem. You were shocked to see how Mr. Jensen interacted with Dan and several other boys in the class. He reprimanded them constantly, using language that made them feel punished and de-valued. You have heard similar stories from other parents about treatment their children have received from some staff in the school. You cannot tolerate this type of behavior for Dan or other students, and you are worried because you have a daughter with learning disabilities in the fourth grade who could end up with Mr. Jensen next year. You are now at your local Parent Center talking to a parent support person (**the listener**) to talk about how kids with disabilities are being treated in your school.

Tips for the Listener in Story #2



- As the **listener**, listen well so that you can identify the major issues that the parent is concerned about. Ask clarifying questions as necessary, and be prepared to summarize the parent's main points of concern at the end of the conversation. You might begin by saying: "I can tell you are really concerned about this. Let me see if I can repeat to you your main concerns so we can start to think about what to do in this situation."

Story #3



1. You are parent of a child with special needs (**the story teller**). You have spent the last year on the school district's parent advisory board, where your group has discussed ways to improve services to children with disabilities in your school. Your advisory board has come up with a detailed plan for an after school program that would provide homework support to children with and without disabilities. It's now spring and you are really angry because you've just found out that the school board's budget did not include funding for the program. You feel that the principal did not advocate hard enough for these funds and has let your group down. You also feel that the whole idea of a parent advisory board is a waste of time, given that the school board isn't paying any attention to your advice. You are talking to the chair of the parent advisory board (**the listener**) because you think that the two of you should head right to the principal's office to let him know that both the process and the new budget are terrible.

Tips for the Listener in Story #3



- As the chair of the parent advisory board (**the listener**), do your best to listen to what the parent has to say so that you can clarify the issues and make a plan to act on the situation. Begin your summary by saying something like: “I can tell that this situation is very upsetting to you. Let me see if I can summarize your major points so that we can make a plan for action. I hear you saying that you are most concerned about...”

Questions for Discussion



- What did you learn about listening through this exercise? Asking clarifying questions?
- What was most challenging for you in this role play?
- How might you use these skills in your personal and professional lives?