



R-Group Process

Active Listening

Active Listening is about being PRESENT with another person. Not to fix them. Not to change them. Not to make them feel better. When listening, simply BE. Relax your mind and its tendency to “figure them out” or try to come up with a solution. Simply be present. Listen. Pay attention to what they are saying for the simple reason of being WITH them, not FOR them.

Active Listening Tools

- Be silent – let the other one do the talking
- Echo “What I hear you say is...” (Use THEIR words) Ask: “Did I hear you correctly? Did I get it?”
- Ask Meaning: (If you don’t follow what they are saying.)
 - “What do you mean by _____?”
 - “Tell me more.”
- Maintain Eye Contact
- Be Curious
- Seek to Understand (not to be understood)
- Go on THEIR journey

NON-PRODUCTIVE QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

- 1) Why? (Puts them in their heads)
- 2) Advice
- 3) Sharing (“I used to do that too.” Or, “I feel the same way.”)
- 4) Negating (“That’s all she did. That doesn’t sound so bad.”)
- 5) Projecting Expressing your own thoughts about what they are experiencing.
- 6) Judging
- 7) Rescuing (“I think you’re great.” “Don’t feel that way. You’re fine.” “Everyone loves you.” “God loves you.”)

- 8) Diagnosing (“You have dad/mom issues.” “You haven’t forgiven your husband.”)
- 9) Fixing (Coming up with the solution for them.)
- 10) Consoling during their sharing. (This is ok when they regress back to core emotions.)

The Process

Partner up or get into groups of 3-4. If you are a small group and want to do it all together that works also.

Get a volunteer to go first.

The volunteer has 2 minutes to talk about something that is difficult in their life at this moment, a relationship, something at home with kids or wife, a work problem, a big idea, really could be anything they want to talk about.

Listener(s) - goal is to be completely silent for the 2 minutes and just listen.

Then once the 2 minutes are up, listener(s) practice some of the active listening tools.

- First **echo** what you heard them saying.
- Second **ask meaning** of something you heard them saying or tell me more
- Third notice when the temptation comes up to use any of the non-productive items

Switch partners and go again.

Debrief

- What was it like to share for 2 mins and have no response?
- What was it like to have someone echo or ask meaning?
- What was it like to listen quietly and not share?
- What was it like to echo and ask meaning?
- Did you notice the temptation to use any of the non-productive items?
- If so what did you notice wanting to do?

Teaching Piece

Practice so that you can become natural with this. Anytime something comes out as canned or with certain phrases being used, it can trigger a negative reaction in someone. For example we’ve heard men or women say that when they use certain language with their husbands or wives, they get a comment like, “don’t use that men (women) at the cross stuff on me?”

So don't be attached to the specific language of "what I hear you saying is..." (for example). Use different language like "thanks for telling me that. Did you say..." or "I'm hearing ... from you, is that right?"

The key with any tool is that the point is connection, love, drawing us closer to one another. You can tell your spouse this before using something or when they make a comment about you using something on them. "The reason I'm doing this is because I love you, want connection with you, want to know how to show you that I love you better, and I want our relationship to draw closer. Would you be willing to let me fumble through some tools as I learn how to do this?"

Stretch

Is there someone in your life this week who you would like to make a stretch to practice active listening with?