



Relationship Skills

ABOUT MORNINGSIDE CENTER

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility's evidence-validated programs engage young people in learning essential social and emotional skills and help educators build productive and respectful schools. The 4Rs Program combines superior children's books with engaging SEL activities that explore community, feelings, relationships, conflict, and problem-solving, adding depth to literacy instruction.

Introduction to Active Listening, the Three P's

By: The 4Rs



Introduction to Active Listening: The Three Ps

Note to the teacher:

This activity is an excerpt from The 4Rs™ [Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution] *Teaching Guide for Middle School*, Unit 3, Understanding and Respecting Others: Becoming a Better Listener, 44-46

The Third P, Paraphrasing, is explained and practiced in the lesson following the one below.

Time: 35-40 minutes

Materials: chalk board or chart paper; writing and drawing supplies

Many unnecessary conflicts can be avoided if people listen well, treat each other with respect, and try to understand where the other person is coming from. When we have a conflict, listening is one of the best ways to work toward a solution. We are listening all the time – we listen to television, to noise on the street, to people talking. One of our goals in this class is to learn and practice a special kind of listening called “active listening.” To help students remember the sets of skills that make up active listening, we can say that it consists of The Three Ps:

The Three Ps

Paying good attention

Providing gentle encouragement

Paraphrasing the words we hear

By practicing The Three Ps, we show respect for other people, we can learn from them, and we can understand where they are coming from.

(15) The First P: Paying good attention

Say that this activity will focus on the “First P,” paying good attention.

- I. Ask for a volunteer from the class to come up front and tell you something. While the person is talking, model poor listening (looking



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away, fidgeting with clothes or hair, doing something else). Ask how the person felt while you were doing this. Ask the class what the class saw. Now have the person tell you the same information, but model good listening, (attention focused on speaker, positive body language, no interrupting). Make a good listening checklist to post on the wall.

2. Ask the students to pair up. One student speaks for one minute about something s/he likes to do on the weekend while the other child gives good attention (by showing good listening behaviors). Then they switch roles and repeat the activity.
3. Discuss: how did it feel when someone paid good attention to you? How was it to be the listener? Easy? Difficult? All of us, whether adults or children, need reminders to keep our listening at its best. So give the children ample opportunities to practice paying good attention, one of the key aspects of active listening.

(15) The Second P: Providing gentle encouragement

Tell the students that another part of active listening, the “Second P,” is providing gentle encouragement. You can do this by simply saying, “Tell me more” or “I’d like to hear more about that.”

You can also ask questions. When you ask a question, you show you’re interested in what the other person is saying. We often ask questions when we don’t understand something or when we want to know more. In school, if you don’t understand something the teacher says, it’s important to ask a question. If you don’t, you may miss some important directions or some important information. It’s tricky, though. If you ask too many questions, the other person may feel you’re simply nosy or that



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you are prying inappropriately into their business. That's why we talk about gentle encouragement. You want to show you're interested, but not too interested!

Have the students practice gentle encouragement by telling them a simple story about something that happened to you recently and pausing to encourage them to ask you a question about your story—either something they want to know more about or something they don't understand. Reverse roles: Ask a student to come up and talk about a favorite pet and model asking gentle questions to get the person to say more.

Then ask the students to talk in pairs about a favorite adult or a place they like to go and say that in this exercise, in addition to paying good attention, you want them to ask a question of the other person. After the first student has had a turn to talk and answer the other student's question, they switch and the other student gets a chance to talk.

The Three Ps
Paying good attention
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