

## **STUDENT HANDOUT A**

### **ACTIVE LISTENING**

Active listening means listening with the goal of understanding of the speaker's thoughts, ideas, feelings, and needs. It means putting your own ideas and your agenda aside and actively responding in ways that deepen your understanding of the speaker's point of view.

Active listeners:

- Give the speaker their full attention. They do not think about what they themselves will say.
- Refrain from interrupting and changing the subject.
- Hold off making judgments and forming opinions until they have fully heard the speaker out.
- Encourage the speaker with nonverbal cues. They lean toward the speaker; maintain good eye contact; and use facial expressions, gestures like nodding, and verbalizations like "mm-hmm" to indicate that they are following what the speaker says.
- Check for understanding by asking questions such as "What did you mean..." or "Could you tell me more?" They also paraphrase and summarize, restating in their own words what the speaker said in order to check for facts and meaning, saying things like "Do you mean ...," or "So you're saying that ...."
- "Reflect back" the speaker's feelings, saying things like "It sounds like you're really proud of that," or "You must have felt hurt when that happened." Only when feelings are acknowledged will the speaker feel heard and understood.

Active listening can be easy when someone is talking about a situation that does not directly involve us or one in which we have little or no personal interest.

Active listening can be very hard when we are directly involved in a debate, disagreement, or conflict.