

LESSON 5 - COMPASSIONATE LISTENING & VALIDATING

Timing	This lesson is designed for a 40-45 minute framework or two 20 minutes lessons.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bell or chime• Effective vs. Ineffective listening video: https://safeshare.tv/x/ss596d094891be8• Compassionate Listening and Validating Reflection Sheet
Outcome	Students will understand how the quality of their listening can affect their connection to the person speaking to them, and that compassionate responsiveness requires mindful self-awareness along with understanding how the other person feels.
Sequence	This is the fifth lesson in the Community Pillar series. This lesson leads into Lesson 6 where students will learn how to support one another around their wellbeing goals.

Notes:

Lesson Summary for Teachers

This lesson will offer students an experience of compassionate listening. It comes in two parts, and each part is designed to be a short, yet powerful opportunity for students to open their sense doors and listen deeply to what another may be experiencing and saying – beyond the words.

Students will first practice identifying characteristics of ineffective listening. It is important for students to recognize the signs of an ineffective listener and to notice their personal listening habits.

They will then learn about compassionate listening. In the first part of this exercise, the compassionate action will be “listening” and taking in the full experience of the person they are “listening to”. In other words, the doing is the offering of presence to the person who is sharing. After listening with compassion, students will have quiet moments to write and reflect on their experience listening with full presence. In the second part of this exercise, students will learn three characteristics of active listening that can be used when they are compassionately listening to another.

It is important to emphasize that even though these active listening strategies may be useful in some circumstances, they do not need to be used all of the time. The skill building is being able to be present with the speaker and selflessly provide them with what they need.

Outcome Overview

Students will know:

- The characteristics of compassionate listening.
- The different techniques that can be used to provide another with support while listening with presence.

Students will be able to (skills):

- Identify characteristics of ineffective listening.
- Listen effectively and compassionately.
- Use active listening skills to provide compassionate support to another.

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Touching Base on Community Practice

Can anybody describe the difference between empathy and compassion? In what situations can you feel compassion? Since we last met, has anyone expressed compassion towards someone? Or did somebody show compassion to you? How did you feel when someone showed compassion?

Lesson for Students

Begin this lesson with the Mindful Breathing practice. See the Mindful Breathing card for cues.

We all know that communities rely upon strong communication, so today we are going to talk about compassionate listening and validating each other's emotions.

These ways of interacting will help us better understand and be better understood by one another.

Ineffective Listening Activity

Let's get into pairs.

In our pairs we will explore different ways of listening, and play with effective listening and ineffective listening. What might it look like to be an ineffective listener?

Allow students to answer.

If they don't come up with the following ideas, be sure to mention fidgeting, talking only about themselves, looking around or away from the speaker, and interrupting.

Assign one person in each pair to pretend to be an ineffective listener. The other partner is the speaker, and will have a minute to share something with their partner. The speaker should share something important to them or something they love to do.

When you were telling your story, how did it feel when your partner was not listening effectively? Now that we know the characteristics of an ineffective listener, what do you think are the characteristics of an effective listener?

Allow students to answer.

Compassionate Listening Activity Part 1

Now we are going to practice an effective listening technique. This technique is called "compassionate listening" and is an important kind of empathetic action that we can show to others.

With this type of listening the compassionate act is being fully present and listening to the speaker with your full attention. Being compassionate while listening often means not offering opinions or advice, unless it is asked for.

The first part of compassionate listening is listening to another with your full attention. Not making judgements or comments, just listening. Please go back into your pairs and tell the same stories you told before. This time, when you are listening to your partner, practice compassionate listening. Have an open body posture, place your full attention on your partner's story, and try not to interrupt them.

Let each person have some time to tell their stories to their partners and then switch.

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Lesson for Students (Cont.)

How did it feel to tell your story to someone who was giving you their full attention? When you were listening to your partner, did you notice anything come up for you such as wanting to offer advice or talk about yourself? It is important to be aware of impulses that we have that can get in the way of our compassionate listening.

Compassionate Listening Activity Part 2

Now that we have practiced listening to someone with our full attention, we will practice a few strategies that we can use to selflessly provide support to the speaker.

These three strategies are:

- 1. Asking clarifying questions;*
- 2. Validating another's emotions, and;*
- 3. Offering support if asked for.*

These three strategies can be used to help make the speaker feel understood by you. Most people actually don't want advice, but many people want to feel understood.

A clarifying question is a question that helps you understand their story more such as, "I'd like to understand, has this happened before?" or, "was this the first time?"

Validating someone's emotions helps you to affirm that you were listening and that you understand how they must have felt, for example, "Gosh, I can imagine how alone and a little sad you must have felt in that moment".

Finally, if you sense that they may be asking for advice, you can ask clarifying questions before offering your thoughts such as, "Are you interested in hearing some thoughts?" or, "I'd be glad to offer my advice if you are interested?"

Let's try practicing these skills with your partners.

Remember to try listening with your full attention.

Have them tell stories to each other again, trying to use these skills. Discuss their experiences once both people have practiced listening in this way.

Before we move into our reflection questions, let's go over the characteristics of being a compassionate listener:

- 1. Listen with your full attention without judgement.*
- 2. Ask clarifying questions, validate their emotions, and only offer advice if it is desired by the speaker.*

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Reflection Questions & Assessment

- *When you were the listener, did you feel differently about what your partner said when you were distracted versus when you were listening effectively?*
- *Are there ways that you as a speaker can kindly ask for the attention of the listener if you are sharing something important to you?*
- *How did it feel to listen with compassion? How did it feel when someone listened to you with compassion?*
- *How do you think listening with compassion might impact the quality of your life?*
- *How might you validate emotions when someone doesn't explicitly tell you how they are feeling?*

Weekly Practice

Between now and the next time we practice together, try to practice listening effectively. Notice opportunities for validating the emotions of those around you.

Teacher to Teacher Commentary

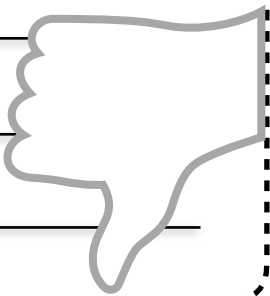
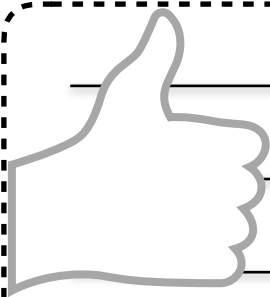
- It is suggested to divide this lesson into two parts. On the first day, have the students participate in the effective versus the ineffective listening. On the second day, work on compassionate listening skills.
- The students enjoyed the opportunity to role play the different ways to listen.
- It is important to give the students many examples of compassionate listening to help them grasp the idea.
- It is suggested to start the lesson by showing the video that illustrates the difference between effective and ineffective listening. Discuss the differences between the two as shown in the clip.
- It is important to emphasize that sometimes the most compassionate action is inaction. This can be a difficult concept to understand, however, it is vital to the concept of compassionate listening. Oftentimes, a listener offers unsolicited support, even when it is not desired. Therefore, it is important help students be aware of this tendency and to practice being full present and selflessly supporting the speaker.

Diving Deeper

Challenge students to try to use the effective listening and validating emotions at least once during the school day today or at home tonight. Tell them to be prepared to share how they used compassionate listening in their conversation, what emotion they identified in the other person, and how it felt to compassionately listen to another. It is also important to ask them how their listening changed when they were focusing on compassionately listening to another. Ask for a few volunteers to share these at the beginning of the next Community lesson.

Compassionate Listening and Validating Reflection Sheet

1. What is the difference between ineffective and effective listening? Which of these types of listening helped you to appreciate your partner more? Why?



2. How might you validate emotions when someone doesn't explicitly tell you how they are feeling?

3. How do you think having compassionate listening skills might impact the quality of your life?

