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Member Resource

Title:	I Heard What You Said, but What Did You Say?
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Type of Activity or Resource:	Activity
Objective:	To enhance awareness of the necessity of clarifying that a message was heard accurately
Recommended Age Group:	elementary-adult
Materials Needed:	
Time:	40 minutes
Additional Notes:	

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I Heard What You Said, But What Did You Say?

Objective(s):

To enhance awareness of the necessity of clarifying that a message was heard accurately.

To provide the participants with the opportunity to practice identifying the feelings of people with whom they speak.

Age:

Elementary to adult

Procedure:

1. Distribute Handout 23.A entitled, "Active Listening" [page 69]. Go over the material in the handout with the participants. It would be most helpful to ask a participant to volunteer to help demonstrate the following activity before asking all the participants to practice.
2. Divide the participants into dyads. Ask each dyad to designate one person as the speaker and one person as the listener.
3. Instruct the listener to ask the speaker to "Tell me about...."
Examples:
Tell me about a time when you were scared.
Tell me about the worst experience in your life.
Tell me about your plans for the future.
4. After the speaker has responded to the question without interruption, the listener should state the essence of the message that the speaker sent and try to identify the feelings behind the message. Allow the participants to use the phrases on the handout as guidelines. Be sure to instruct the listener to use feeling words to identify feelings. Tell the speaker to correct the listener if the listener heard incorrectly.
5. Repeat the procedure with the roles in the dyads reversed.

Handout 23.A Active Listening

6. Suggested questions for processing:
- A. How did it feel to be the speaker and have your feelings identified?
 - B. Was it difficult to listen without interrupting? Why?
 - C. When two people are communicating about an emotional issue, why is it so difficult for them to hear each other?

The technique of active listening is a simple skill. When used appropriately, it will greatly enhance communication. When communicating about a serious issue, establish eye contact and send signals to the speaker that you are following what he or she is saying. This can be done by nodding occasionally or affirming with a simple "I hear you." The key component to active listening is to wait until the speaker is finished with a train of thought and then tell the speaker what you thought you heard.

*"If I'm hearing you correctly, you're saying that...
and you are feeling...."*

"I think I heard you say... and you are feeling...."

Be sure you do this before you give your own response. Otherwise, you may be reacting to something that you thought the speaker was saying, but wasn't really intended. In other words, be sure to clarify that what you thought you heard is actually what the speaker intended to communicate.

The other important element of active listening is the ability to be able to identify the feelings which lay behind the content of what the speaker is saying. Most often, when people are feeling strongly about an issue, they want their feelings to be heard more than their content. Sometimes the speaker may not even mention feelings, but the listener can help the speaker by reflecting the feelings to the speaker.

"I'm hearing you say... and you're feeling...."

"Sounds like you are feeling...."

If the listener provides inaccurate feedback, the speaker should let the listener know.