

The Art of LISTENING

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." ~Stephen Covey

LISTENING IS A KEY ELEMENT IN DIALOGUE. Dialogue involves people not only speaking but also really listening. The intent is to leave the conversation with a better understanding of the topic and the different perspectives that make up a community. As Canada experiences changes to substance use policies, it is important that we create spaces where people can talk openly and honestly about the issues. We all need to be able to voice our perspectives in a respectful, non-judgemental environment. People with different ideas must feel they are heard and understood, not dismissed or excluded.

Listening is more than just hearing words. Listening involves:

How does it feel to be disagreed with?

Empathy

To fully understand another person we must try to see the world through the other person's eyes – feel the world from their perspective. This does not mean we must agree with their ideas. We accept them for who they are while listening to them and come to understand the differences in our perspectives and ways of thinking.

What are my assumptions on this change/health issue?

Openness

Listening means we are ready to receive new information even if it undermines our own position. To listen is to be ready to reflect on our own assumptions and see how they may affect the way we see the world, and how different assumptions might lead to different conclusions.

Patience

To be a good listener, we need to practice patience and shift our attention from ourselves and what we have to say in order to hear and understand what the other person has to offer.

How can I practice patience?

IN ATTENTIVE LISTENING:

- We listen, not with the intention of constructing a better argument or finding the flaws, but to understand.
- We listen openly to multiple perspectives rather than murder the alternatives.
- We are curious about the experiences of others, ask genuine questions, and try to understand the true intent beneath what the speaker is saying.
- We listen not only for what is being said but also for what is *not* being said. We listen to the underlying emotions and needs.