

SOLER - Five Key Elements of Active Listening

SIT squarely

Sit and face the person you are talking to. We should sit attentively at an angle to the person so that we can look at them directly and show that we are listening to them and paying attention to them.

OPEN posture

Do not cross your arms or legs as this can make you appear anxious or defensive. An open posture says to the client that we are open to what they have to say.

LEAN forwards

Shows you are interested in what the person is talking about. It also means that the person can lower their voice if they wish to, particularly if they are talking about personal issues, for example.

EYE contact

Maintaining eye contact again shows that you are interested and listening to what the person has to say. It doesn't mean staring at the person, as this can make them feel uncomfortable, but maintaining good, positive eye contact.

A WORD OF CAUTION - while eye contact is a sign of engagement in Western cultures, in some Asian and Indigenous cultures it can be considered intrusive or disrespectful. Be mindful of cultural variations and adapt appropriately to each client's background and comfort level. Also be mindful that eye contact may also be uncomfortable for some neurodivergent clients.

RELAXED body language

This shows the person that you are not in a rush to get away but are letting them talk at their own pace.

Egan, G. (2002). *The Skilled Helper – A Problem-Management and Opportunity-Development Approach to Helping (7th Edition)*. Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.