

Active Listening and Clean Questioning



International Event Focus Topic:

**ACTIVE LISTENING AND
MEDIATOR QUESTIONS - WITH
JOANNE LAW & MAINA MIGWI**

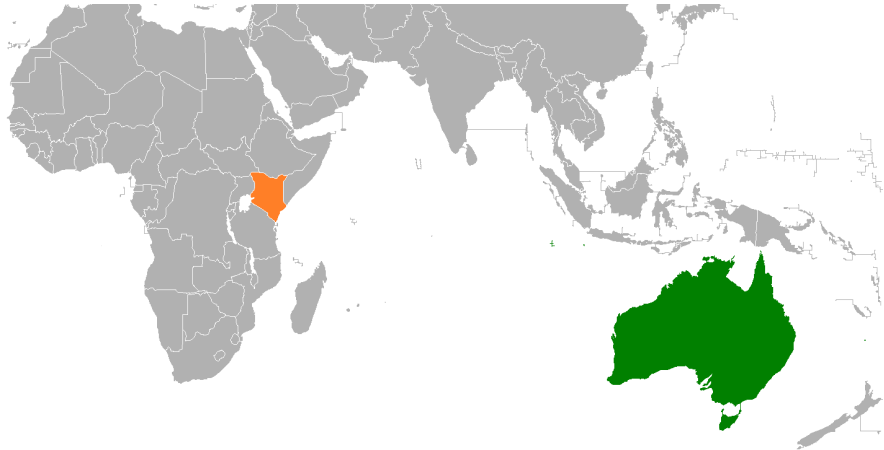
International Event



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MEDIATION INSTITUTE ACKNOWLEDGES ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES AS THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF COUNTRY AND RECOGNISES THEIR CONTINUING CONNECTION TO LAND, WATERS AND CULTURE. WE PAY OUR RESPECT TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND TO EMERGING LEADERS.

I COME TO YOU TODAY FROM THE LANDS OF THE ...



Introductions

Use the chat to share who you are, where you are and anything else you'll like to share.



SESSION AGENDA

- **Active Listening**
- **What are Clean Questions?**
- **Key Word(s)**
- **The 6Ws**
- **Putting the 6Ws to work**



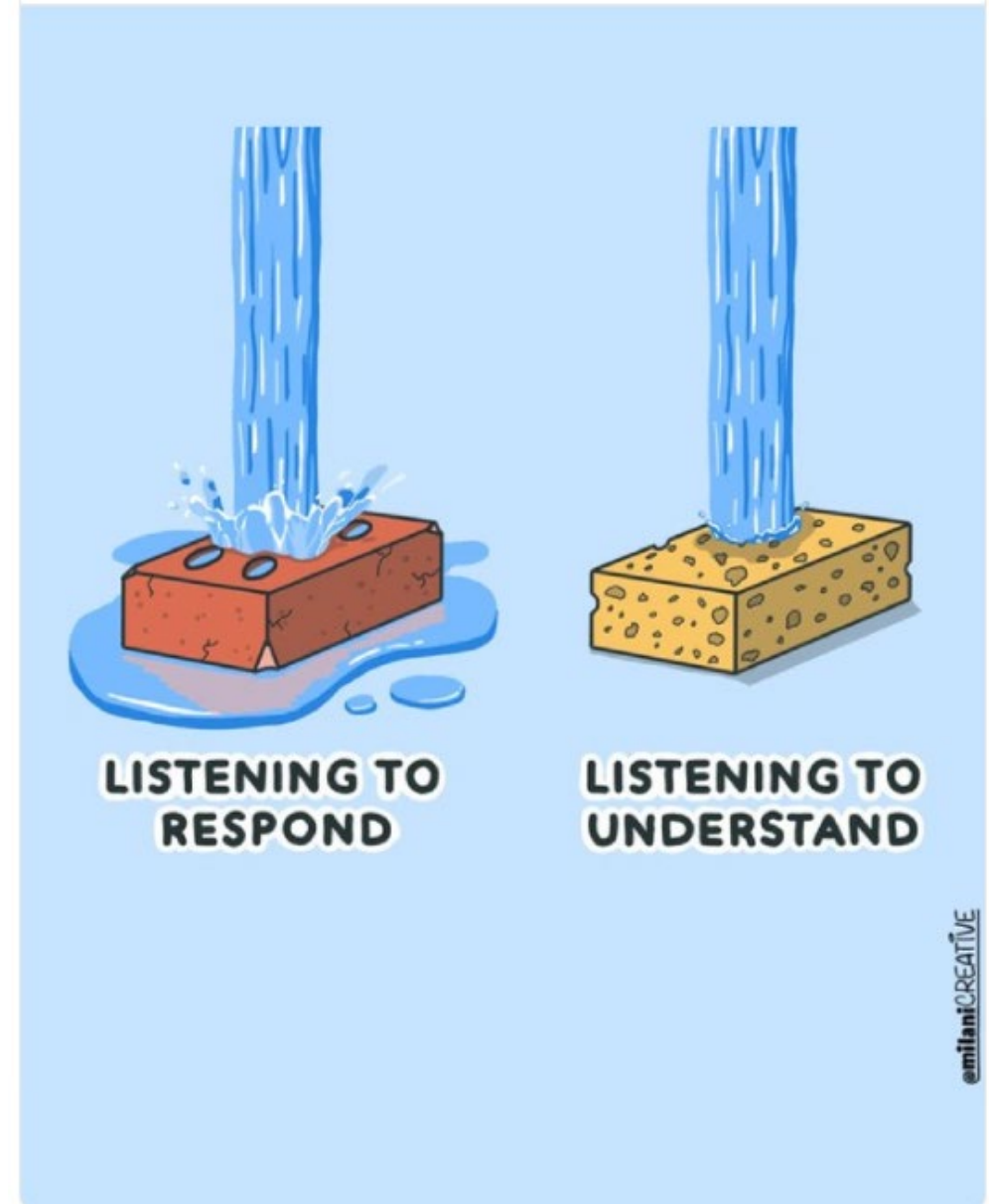
WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

Purpose – a communication skill that requires listening to understand.

It involves actively processing and seeking to understand the meaning and intent beyond the words.

Key Points

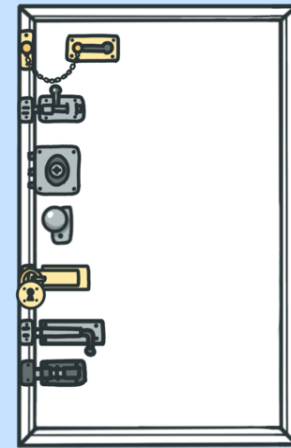
1. **Being fully present** – focus fully on your conversation partner
2. **Pay attention to everything** – the words only tell a part of the story. Listen for tone, watch body language and gestures.
3. **Ask open ended questions** – ask questions that can't be answered with yes / no. Encourage the speaker to elaborate.
4. **Paraphrase, summarise and reflect** – don't try to change the facts and the feelings you hear. You are just trying to check your understanding.



WHAT ISN'T ACTIVE LISTENING?

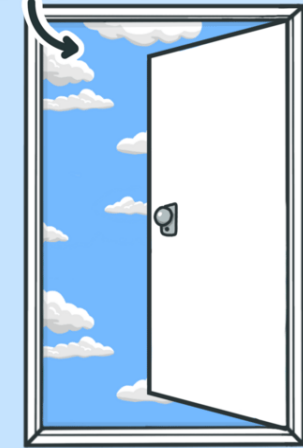
1. **Don't interrupt** – don't interrupt their flow unnecessarily. It can make them feel unheard.
2. **Avoid Judgement and Criticism** – if you are thinking about what you disagree with your mind will be closed to new ideas or understanding.
3. **Don't offer solutions or advice** – focus on understanding.
4. **Don't be distracted** – give your full attention. Don't try to transcribe or do other things while listening.
5. **Don't forget to check your understanding** – you need to check that you did understand, don't assume
6. **Don't use it to pivot into your own story!**

YOUR THINKING WHEN YOU DISAGREE



LIMITED GROWTH

CURIOSITY



LIMITLESS GROWTH

WHAT ARE CLEAN QUESTIONS?

Clean Questions are a Clean Language technique

Purpose – to invite clients to express their thoughts and feelings freely without imposing the mediators biases or assumptions.

Questions – clean language questions can help uncover the clients meaning even when it is not clear even to them.

Metaphors and Symbols – people often use metaphors or symbols to describe their feelings. Applying clean questioning to that type of speech can encourage inner exploration and realisations for clients.



WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF CLEAN QUESTIONS?

- **It encourages free expression** – without being constrained or contaminated by the questioner’s assumptions about the way that people or the world works.
- **It is content – free and non-leading** – making it ethical and helpful for those in the mediators’ role
- **It makes use of “semantic primes”** – which are concepts that can’t be expressed in simpler terms (like prime numbers in maths) meaning that there are surprisingly few Clean Questions
- **Clean questions invited clients to self-examine** – clean questions focus them “somewhere”, “somewhen” or “somewhat” in their inner world. The major benefit isn’t the information provided to the questioner but what the client did to process or make sense of the question.



WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE?

- **Link to what was previously expressed** – without being constrained or contaminated by the questioner’s assumptions about the way that people or the world works.
- **Do not reference the facilitator** – don’t include yourself in the question e.g. “tell me about ...” isn’t a clean question.
- **Do not paraphrase** – use the client’s language exactly when using clean questions. Summaries, reframes and paraphrasing have their place just not if you are using clean language.
- **Do use curiosity** – clean questions can seem mechanical and not empathetic. Use your tone and body language to express genuine curiosity and a desire to understand to “soften” rather than language that will undermine the clean questioning.



WHAT IS THE CLEAN LANGUAGE PROCESS IN MEDIATION?

1. **Identify the Key Words** – key words are the specific words or phrase that the client said that you will repeat back to them. This acknowledges what they have said.
2. **Direct the client's attention** – use an “and” at the start of your question and the client's words to direct their attention to a specific aspect of their experience.
3. **Ask a question** – Formulate your question to encourage the client to explore their thoughts or feelings further.

KEY WORD(S)

First identify the key word(s) in the statement you are questioning
What are 'Key Words'

Example Statement: 'I don't trust him'

- **Key word(s): 'I don't TRUST HIM'**

Example Statement: 'The sensor light is annoying'

- **Key word(s): 'The sensor LIGHT IS ANNOYING'**



EASY CLEAN QUESTIONING - 6WS

- **Who**
- **What**
- **When**
- **Where**
- **Why**
- **how**

JOINING CLEAN QUESTIONS

AND is the most used joiner in questioning. AND questions assist in encouraging a person to consider alternatives to their 'Black and White' statement. By using 'and' as the joiner, we are joining their statement to our question. This by default makes our question their question, and less likely to be considered aggressive or offensive.

Client Statement

(S)he doesn't Listen.

6W Questions

... and how do you know (s)he doesn't listen?

... and how does it make you feel when (s)he doesn't listen?

PUTTING THE 6WS TO WORK

**First identify the key word(s) in the statement you are questioning
Join and apply a 6W to the keyword(s).**

For example,

- Client Statement
- *I don't trust him.*
- Example 6W Questions:
 - And *why* don't you trust him?
 - And *what* about him, don't you trust?
 - And *when* would you know you could trust him?

Exercise

Objective: To help participants practice using Clean Language questions to explore a topic deeply and without leading the conversation.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Materials: Handout cheat sheet

Steps:

1. **Break out rooms** – groups of 2
2. **Round 1** - client starts to tell the mediator about a conflict or issue. *Nothing too traumatic!* Mediator asks Clean Language Questions. Follow each response with another clean language question. After 5 minutes you'll be prompted to swap roles.
3. **Round 2** - repeat with a different issue. The client is now the mediator and the mediator the client.
4. **Group Debrief** – How was that? What do you want to share?