

MODULE

1

# “let’s talk”

## COMMUNICATION & LISTENING



### LEARNING GOALS

During the introductory session, participants will be invited to:

- Learn one of the most important communication skills—active listening.
- Understand active listening and gain skills to use in conversation.
- Use real-life situations to examine runaway prevention from all aspects.
- Learn a variation of the NRS crisis intervention model that can be used in everyday situations.

## DEFINE THE ISSUE

Adolescence is a beautiful, yet complicated time. Youth are discovering who they are, navigating new responsibilities, and managing increasing independence. Youth often balance a lot - from school, to work, to finances, and responsibilities at home.

Those who reach out to the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) often cite communication, or a lack thereof, as an issue in their families. Learning to communicate more effectively will help all of us in our daily lives, whether at home, school, work or in relationships.

NRS's frontline team members, including crisis services center staff and volunteers, learn a five-step, trauma-informed, solution-focused crisis intervention model to use with every person who calls the 24/7 hotline or uses our online services. NRS focuses on nonjudgmental and nondirective communication. Module 1 shares with participants the NRS model and active listening skills.

## ICONS

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



## MODULE ACTIVITIES

	ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
	A. Listening to Communicate and Barriers to Communication	15 minutes	Discussion/Activity
	B. Active Listening	10 minutes	Discussion/Exercise
	C. Communicating During a Crisis	10 minutes	Discussion
	D. Problem-Solving Scenarios	15 minutes	Discussion/Exercise



Total time required: **50 minutes**

## MATERIALS

- Poster paper or chalk/dry-erase board
- Markers or chalk
- “Good Listener/Bad Listener” worksheet
- “Active Listening” handout
- “Listening Journal” worksheet
- “Communicating During a Crisis” handout
- “Problem-Solving Scenarios” handout (copy and cut before distributing)
- “Problem-Solving Scenario Think Sheet” worksheet



Contact the NRS Prevention & Youth Engagement Specialist at **773-289-1723** or [prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org](mailto:prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org) for support and technical assistance.

## ACTIVITY 1A

### LISTENING TO COMMUNICATE AND BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION



15 minutes

**STATE** For the next few minutes we're going to practice communicating with a partner. Each partner in a group of two will receive a different set of directions, and they must not tell their partner what their directions are for this activity to work.

**DIVIDE** Your participants into two equal groups.

**STATE** Group A, when you meet with your partner, I would like you to talk about something you are passionate about. Include as many details as possible, talk as much as you can about the subject, and of course have fun!

**STATE** Group B, when you meet with your partner, I would like you to use your absolute worst listening skills. Show your partner that you are not listening to what they are saying from only your actions, and of course have fun!

**HAVE** each participant PICK A PARTNER from the opposite group.

**ALLOW** 1 minute to complete the activity.

**STATE** Okay, great! Now, we're going to switch things around. The person who talked last time will now be the listener. The other partner who was the listener previously will talk about something they are passionate about with as much detail as possible. Listening partners, your job will be to display your best active listening skills!

Speakers, pay close attention to your partner's actions, because a person's posture, gestures, and facial expressions can let you know if that person is really listening to you.

**ALLOW** 1 minute to complete the activity.

**HAND OUT** "Good Listener/Bad Listener" worksheet to each participant.

**STATE** On the worksheet I just handed you, please take 1 minute to write down or draw specific examples of how your partner displayed signs of listening or not listening. For example, "My partner wasn't looking at me when I was talking," or "My partner was nodding their head while I was talking."

Also include how you felt when you were talking and you knew your partner was or was not listening.

**ALLOW** 1 minute to complete the worksheet.

ACTIVITY 1A →

## ACTIVITY 1A CONTINUED

**STATE** Now we're going to share how you know that someone IS NOT listening to you. Remember, there are many different ways to show active listening. Please give me an example from your "Good Listener/Bad Listener" worksheet or from a real-life situation.

**WRITE** responses on a piece of poster paper or on a chalk/dry-erase board. Responses might include:

- Doesn't maintain eye contact
- Calls you by the wrong name
- Asks you about something you've already told them
- Looks away, down, anywhere but at you
- Body language—yawns, falls asleep, looks at watch
- Says they have to leave
- Says they don't have time
- Makes excuses for not wanting to listen any longer
- Has to have music or TV on



Use the "Good Listener/Bad Listener" handout as a template.

**DISCUSS** responses.

**ASK** Who can tell me about how your own families or community show that they are listening? Was there a conversation in which you found it difficult to get your point across?

**DISCUSS** responses.

**STATE** Sometimes we come across barriers to communication. Barriers can be anything that make it more difficult for us to communicate. For example, they can be language differences, emotions, or even physical objects.

**ASK** What were some of the barriers to communication in this conversation where you found it difficult to get your point across?

**WRITE** responses on a separate piece of poster paper or on another area of the chalk/dry-erase board.

**DISCUSS** why these barriers made it difficult to communicate.

Responses might include:

- Distractions—room noise
- Weren't listening
- Interrupted me
- Thinking of something else while I was talking
- Thinking of what they were going to say next
- Not interested in what I was saying

ACTIVITY 1A →

## ACTIVITY 1A CONTINUED

**STATE** SSince we've listed some ways we know that someone is not listening to you as well as barriers to communication, let's list some ways we know that someone IS REALLY listening to you.

**WRITE** responses on the first piece of poster paper or the first area of the chalk/dry-erase board.

Responses might include:

- Gives undivided attention
- Looks at you
- Takes notes
- Pays attention
- Finds a quiet place to talk
- Doesn't answer the phone/second line if you're on the phone
- Isn't texting or using a device
- Asks the right questions
- Understands what you're saying
- Nods head and/or leans toward you
- Makes speaker feel understood

**STATE** These qualities and feelings are important for us to remember because communication is difficult, no matter how old we are or where we're from.

**ASK** Let's spend some time talking about listening. But before we do, does anyone have any questions or comments?

**DISCUSS** responses.

GOOD LISTENER/BAD LISTENER

**Directions:** Complete the worksheet using words, phrases, or pictures to learn what it means to be a good or a bad listener.

How I knew my partner was listening to me:	How it made me feel to know that my partner was listening to me:

How I knew my partner wasn't listening to me:	How it made me feel to know that my partner wasn't listening to me:

## ACTIVITY 1B

### ACTIVE LISTENING



10 minutes

**STATE** Before we move on, let's introduce a term called "active listening." Does anyone know what active listening is?

**ALLOW** responses.

**CLARIFY** Active listening is a way of listening where you focus entirely on what the other person is saying. While doing so, you can confirm your understanding of both the content of the conversation and the emotions and feelings underlying the message.

**WRITE** the following terms on poster paper or a chalk/dry-erase board:

- Closed-ended questions
- Open-ended questions
- Paraphrasing and summarizing

**ASK** for definitions of each term. Make sure the following points are covered in the discussion:

**Closed-Ended Questions**—These questions can usually be answered with short, one-word responses. They are usually needed to gather factual information. For example: How old are you? Do you live at home?

- Give me an example of a closed-ended question.
- When would be a good time to use a closed-ended question?

**Open-Ended Questions**—These questions require a more in-depth answer and allow the other person to expand on what is important to them. For example: How are you feeling right now? What is going on? How was your day at school?

- Give me an example of your BEST open-ended question.
- When would be a good time to use an open-ended question?

**Paraphrasing/Summarizing**—The goal of paraphrasing is to make sure that you and the person you're communicating with are on the same page. There are three parts to paraphrasing and summarizing what someone has communicated to you.

- First, you must wrap up (or summarize) all the things they said to you. For example: "You said that you're really upset with your sister today?"
- Next, you should make sure that you clarify what they said to you. For example: "So, let me get this straight: you're mad at your sister because she borrowed your new pair of shoes/video game without asking?"
- And last, be ready to move on to options. For example: "How do you think you want to deal with this issue so that your sister knows how you feel?"

ACTIVITY 1B →



## ACTIVITY 1B CONTINUED

**EMPHASIZE** Of course, you should use these skills when you're in a serious discussion or argument with someone. It's also a good idea to practice them when you're talking casually with friends.

**HAND OUT** "Active Listening" handouts.

**STATE** For the past few minutes, we talked about the important role that active listening plays in good communication. We also saw how bad listening skills can make communicating difficult. Now that we have brainstormed barriers to communication and have practiced both good and bad listening skills, we're going to practice these skills in the "real world." These listening journals will help us recognize if someone is listening or not, and will also help us pay attention to our own communication and listening skills.

**HAND OUT** "Listening Journal" worksheets.

**READ** directions to the participants.



Follow up with participants about their Listening Journal during the next session.

**ASK** Do you have any questions or comments?

**DISCUSS** responses.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

**Closed-Ended Questions**—These questions can usually be answered with short, one-word responses. They are usually needed to gather factual information.

**For example:** How old are you? Do you live at home?

**Open-Ended Questions**—These questions require a more in-depth answer and allow the other person to expand on what is important to them.

**For example:** How are you feeling right now? How was your day at school?

**Paraphrasing/Summarizing**—The goal of paraphrasing is to make sure that you and the person you're communicating with are on the same page. There are three parts to paraphrasing and summarizing what someone has communicated to you.

- First, you must wrap up (or summarize) all of the things they said.
- Next, you should make sure that you accurately understood what they said to you.
- And last, be ready to move on to options.

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**Draw a line to connect the question to the type of active listening it is demonstrating.**

Do you think aliens exist?

How do you feel about Jackie doing that?

So, Sincere ate your food without asking?

How would you want to move forward?

Why did you miss school yesterday?

Are you allergic to peanuts?

Who was the last person who made you laugh?

Do alligators live in water?

Aaliyah said that to you?

**Closed - Ended**

**Open - Ended**

**Paraphrasing**

LISTENING JOURNAL

Directions: Keep a listening journal of three conversations you have over the next few days.

CHART 1 Rate the listening skills of each person you talk to on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).					
WHO	WHEN	SITUATION	LENGTH OF CONVERSATION	OBSERVATIONS/ HOW DID IT MAKE YOU FEEL?	RATING
1.					
2.					
3.					

CHART 2 Evaluate your own listening skills on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). Be prepared to talk about your findings in class.					
WHO	WHEN	SITUATION	LENGTH OF CONVERSATION	OBSERVATIONS/ HOW DID IT MAKE YOU FEEL?	RATING
1.					
2.					
3.					

## ACTIVITY 1C

### COMMUNICATING DURING A CRISIS



10 minutes

**STATE** Our next exercise is an adaptation of the crisis intervention model used at the National Runaway Safeline to help youth in crisis. We think it is important for youth to have these skills too. Crisis intervention is a model of communication to help people express their feelings and then focus on developing a plan to handle their problems.

**HAND OUT** “Communicating During a Crisis” handouts.

**ASK** Who can read this aloud for us?



If time is limited, hand out the worksheet and do not ask anyone to read aloud.

**DISCUSS** the handout.



You may need to clarify the meaning of “rapport” (a connection or relationship).

**ASK** Do you have any questions or comments?

**DISCUSS** responses.

**STATE** Today we talked about what a crisis is, and how to be effective communicators when we experience one. The next time you, a friend, or someone you care about is in trouble, you can use the skills we talked about today. If you want to talk more about this or need someone trustworthy to talk to, call or text the National Runaway Safeline at 1-800-RUNAWAY or chat them at 1800RUNAWAY.org.

## COMMUNICATING DURING A CRISIS



### ESTABLISH RAPPORT

- Let your friend begin the conversation and allow a nonstructured start to the beginning of the interaction.
- Let your friend know they can trust you to keep the conversation confidential (as long as it is within reason and your friend is not going to harm themselves or someone else).
- Speak with a gentle tone.
- Support your friend; make sure they know you care and are there to help.
- Actively listen.



### EXPLORE FACTS AND FEELINGS

- Ask closed-ended questions to extract details.
- Ask open-ended questions to get more information.
- Ask your friend how they feel about the situation.
- Spend most of your time active listening. Let your friend do the talking.
- Paraphrase and clarify to make sure you have a clear idea of your friend's situation.



### FOCUS ON THE MAIN ISSUE(S)

- Ask your friend how you can support them.
- Make sure that what your friend wants help doing is realistic. You cannot change someone else's thoughts or behaviors, only they can.



### EXPLORE OPTIONS

- Let your friend tell you what they would like to do.
- Help your friend explore their options and provide known resources. For example, "What have you tried?," "What has/has not worked?," and/or "Have you thought about . . . ?".
- If you give suggestions, do so without "directing" or "lecturing."
- Go through the pros and cons of each option to find one that is appropriate.



### ESTABLISH A PLAN OF ACTION

- Have your friend come up with a detailed plan, including who, what, when, where, and how.
- Discuss alternate plans.
- Reassure and support your friend. Find out how your friend wants you to help and then tell your friend what you will do to be supportive.

## ACTIVITY 1D

### PROBLEM-SOLVING SCENARIOS



15 minutes

**COPY & CUT OUT** the scenarios before this activity starts.



If you have a relatively small group, aim to have three to four participants per group. Consider having the participants role-play one at a time so the others can watch and comment.

**HAND OUT** one scenario to each group.

**DIVIDE** participants into equal groups.

**HAND OUT** “Problem-Solving Scenario Think Sheets” worksheets.

**STATE** As I read the questions, consider how they apply to the scenario on your worksheet.

#### **Awareness**

- Will the youth run away? What might happen if they run away?
- What do you think happens next?

#### **Resources**

- What resources might keep them from running away?

#### **Communication**

- What role does communication (or lack of communication) play?
- How?

#### **Stress Management/Problem Solving**

- How can this person manage their stress?
- What would you do if you were in this situation?
- Develop a problem-solving action plan for this person.

**STATE** Now you will discuss your scenarios and then present the highlights to the rest of the group.

**HAVE** groups discuss scenarios and present highlights to other participants.

**ASK** Do you have any questions or comments?

**DISCUSS** responses.

## PROBLEM-SOLVING SCENARIOS



**Directions:** Answer the questions your instructor has assigned, using your scenario(s).

### A Friend in Need

Aya's best friend Magdalena is going to run away, and Aya is thinking about going with her. Magdalena wants to get as far away as she can from where she is now. Her dad died a few years ago, and now her mom is working two jobs to support the family and is never home. Magdalena is 15 and the oldest of four children. She has eight-year-old twin sisters, Adelina and Adriana, and a three-year-old brother, Lucas. Since her mom is so busy, Magdalena has to pick up her brother and sisters after school and take care of them until her mom gets home at 9:00 p.m. Magdalena has to clean the house, cook for her siblings, help with their homework, and put them to bed. By the time her mom gets home, Magdalena is exhausted. She keeps falling asleep trying to do her homework, just to wake up the next morning and do it all over again. She has almost no time to hang out with her friends. She even had to drop out of the volleyball team because she could never make it to any practices. Magdalena told Aya that she's going to run away. She doesn't have specific plans about where to go, except that she wants it to be far, far away and that she's going to hitchhike tonight.

- Aya is very worried about her friend's safety and wants to go with her to help protect her. She knows that leaving will worry her mom, but she feels that someone has to help Magdalena. She must decide what to do before tonight.



**Directions:** Answer the questions your instructor has assigned, using your scenarios.

### Too Scared to Tell

Reena is 16 and just found out she's pregnant. She is not allowed to have a boyfriend—especially not an older one—and she's definitely not allowed to be having sex. She is scared her father and stepmother will become violent if they find out. Her dad has never hit her before, but Reena is afraid of what he might do to her or Kaden, her boyfriend.

Reena doesn't think she can safely go home. Reena is thinking of staying with Kaden, who is 26 and lives by himself.



**Directions:** Answer the questions your instructor has assigned, using your scenarios.

### A New House, Not a New Home

Jadyn hates his new foster home. He wishes he could be on his own and did not have to follow all the laws and rules that foster kids face. His new foster parents are really strict and always assume the worst of him. He feels depressed and anxious all the time. He has talked to his caseworker, but they said there are no other placements available right now. Jadyn can't take it anymore and is thinking of running away.

Jadyn tells you all of this on the bus one day. He says he knows he could get in trouble for running, but feels like that is the only choice he has.

**Directions:** Answer the questions your instructor has assigned, using your scenarios.

### Pointing Fingers

Morgan feels frustrated by the hypocrisy of her parents. Her parents go to the dispensary multiple times a week and spend what seems like a lot of money on weed, but Morgan got grounded for having a joint in her pocket. Morgan is 14 and feels like her actions are no different than the people around her, so why is she being punished? Morgan feels like she is the responsible one in her home, and does not smoke as much as any of the people around her. She only uses it for coping with the stress of living with her parents who are always high. Morgan cannot deal with the stress of living with her parents or their hypocrisy anymore, and is planning to leave home.

- Morgan mentions this to her favorite teacher during lunch, and makes a plan to meet with her after school.



**Directions:** Answer the questions your instructor has assigned, using your scenarios.

### In My Shoes

Sakari tells you she might take off from home. She's 15 and her parents are constantly arguing, to the point that the police often end up at their house. Sometimes the arguing is just words, other times it is physical. She has seen her dad kick down the bathroom door to get to her mother. She has asked her mom why she stays and her mom said she is too afraid to leave. Sakari does not know what to do, but avoids going home every day after school by joining clubs and sports, and then goes straight to her room. Weekends are the worst because she is stuck at home. Today is Friday, and she does not think she can make it through this weekend at home. She feels helpless in the situation, and is planning to run away and sleep in the park.



**Directions:** Answer the questions your instructor has assigned, using your scenarios.

### Running from an Abusive Situation

Otto is 16 and is being physically abused at home. His dad hits him so hard sometimes that he literally goes flying across the room. His mom also hits him frequently. Otto and his dad got into another fight last night, and Otto was hurt badly. His ribs are sore from where his dad kicked him and he has a bump on the back of his head. He just can't take it anymore. He wants to get far away and never come back. Otto wants to be in a foster home or someplace where he might feel safe. He talked to a counselor at school, but he felt the counselor made a bunch of excuses for his parents and didn't want to get involved. Otto's ready to leave tonight. He wants to get out and find someone who can help him. He doesn't know what will happen, but he knows he's going to leave. He doesn't want to give his parents the opportunity to hit him again tonight.

- Otto's friends Fernando, Seth, and Abdu stop by as he is packing his bags. They know what's going on and want to help.



PROBLEM-SOLVING SCENARIO THINK SHEET

Directions: As you read through your problem-solving scenarios, keep the following questions in mind.

AWARENESS	RESOURCES	COMMUNICATION	STRESS MANAGEMENT/ PROBLEM SOLVING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will the youth run?</li><li>• What might happen if they run?</li><li>• What do you think happens next?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What resources might keep them from running?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What role does communication (or lack of communication) play?</li><li>• How?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a problem-solving action plan for this person.</li><li>• Is this scenario realistic?</li><li>• Could it happen to anyone you know?</li><li>• How can this person manage their stress?</li></ul>
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.

## ACTIVITY 1

### SUMMARY

**STATE** Now I'd like to summarize the key points from this session.

- Active listening is the most important communication skill we have. In addition to being completely engaged in a conversation, we make the other person feel “listened to.”
  - Tools to use in active listening are:
    - Closed-ended questions
    - Open-ended questions
    - Paraphrasing and summarizing
- Use your Listening Journal between now and our next session to practice this important skill. Remember, practice makes perfect.
  - When communicating during a crisis, remember to:
    - Establish rapport
    - Explore facts and feelings
    - Focus on the main issues
    - Explore options
    - Create an action plan
  - When helping someone solve problems, remember to:
    - Maintain awareness
    - Consider available resources
    - Consider the role of communication
    - Include appropriate stress-management techniques

## HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

- A. Good Listener/Bad Listener
- B. Active Listening
- C. Listening Journal
- D. Communicating During a Crisis
- E. Problem-Solving Scenarios
- F. Problem-Solving Scenario Think Sheet

## REFERENCES

National Runaway Switchboard. (2001). *Runaway prevention curriculum for classroom and community educators*, Chicago, IL: NRS.

## RESOURCES

Beyond Intractability, a website run by the Conflict Information Consortium, provides research and teaching about conflict and its resolution (<https://www.beyondintractability.org>).

Kids Helpline offers information and resources about family relationships (<https://www.kidshelpline.com.au>).

National Runaway Safeline (NRS), the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth, provides crisis intervention through its 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and 1800RUNAWAY.org online services. NRS provides youth and families in crisis with support and access to resources 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (<https://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>).

Talking With Kids is a national initiative by Children Now that encourages parents to talk with their children earlier and more often about tough issues (<https://www.childrennow.org/talkingwithkids/>).