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ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

WHAT IS IT?

Active Listening is the ability to:

- Focus completely on what the client is communicating
- Understand the meaning of what is said and not said
- Support client self-expression
- Reflect, clarify, and summarize accurately

Listening is not passive — it is intentional engagement.

WHY IT MATTERS

When coaches listen deeply:

- Clients feel understood; trust increases
- Clarity emerges faster; Insight deepens
- Questions become more precise

The quality of your listening shapes the quality of the coaching.

LISTENING LEVELS

Level 1: Internal Listening

Focused on self (What should I ask next?)

Level 2: Focused Listening

Fully attentive to client words

Level 3: Global Listening

Aware of tone, energy, emotion, silence, shifts

PCC-level coaching lives primarily in Levels 2 and 3.

LISTENING BARRIERS

- Preparing your next question
- Judging the client's choices
- Comparing to your own story
- Trying to fix or solve
- Distractions (devices, environment, fatigue)

Awareness is the first step toward mastery.

ASSESS CONTEXT

- Listen for worldview and assumptions
- Notice cultural influences
- Reflect deeper meaning, not just content
- Paraphrase clearly
- Capture emotional tone
- Highlight key themes
- Reflections are concise; not repetitive

NOTICE & EXPAND

- Track tone changes
- Notice hesitation or excitement
- Explore emotional shifts
- Ask for precision
- Invite elaboration
- Check assumptions

Clarity reduces projection.

TYPICAL BARRIERS

- Worrying about “doing it right”
- Thinking ahead to the next question
- Trying to sound like a coach
- Over-identifying with the client’s story
- Internal judgment (of self or client)

PREPARE TO LISTEN

- 1 | Take a breath before responding
- 2 | Remove physical distractions
- 3 | Silence internal dialogue intentionally
- 4 | Set an intention to understand, not fix
- 5 | Release attachment to your questions

TIPS | DURING SESSION

- 6 | Listen for emotion beneath words
- 7 | Notice repeated phrases or themes
- 8 | Reflect key words the client uses
- 9 | Allow 3–5 seconds of silence before speaking
- 10 | Don't assume; ask clarifying questions

ADVANCED LISTENING

- 11 | Notice energy shifts
- 12 | Track inconsistencies gently
- 13 | Pay attention to what's missing
- 14 | Mirror the client's language & metaphors
- 15 | Summarize at key transition points

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Did I interrupt prematurely?
- Did I paraphrase accurately?
- What did I miss?
- When did I drift internally?
- Did my listening expand or narrow the conversation?

WRAP UP

Active listening is the invisible architecture of great coaching. Deep listening slows the conversation enough for clarity and insight to emerge naturally. The depth of your listening will determine the depth of your client's discovery.

Are you listening to respond, or listening to reveal what is trying to emerge?

CLASS ASSIGNMENT

During your **next practice session**:

- Focus less on asking “great” questions
- Focus more on being with the client
- Use at least one intentional pause
- Journal afterward about what you noticed

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Great coaching doesn't come from saying the perfect thing. It comes from being fully present with another human being.

*Coaching presence is a skill
AND it's also a way of being.*