



Being a Better Listener



Goals of this seminar:

- Discover better listening skills that members can implement in their everyday lives.
- Discuss the importance of emotional validation when listening.
- Engage in meaningful dialogue with those of different opinions.

Fraternity Values:

- Personal and Intellectual Growth
- Honor and Respect

Suggested Facilitator: Vice President Member Experience, Vice President Inclusion, Director Policy and Prevention Education

Room setup/materials needed:

- Set up the space so there is enough room and flexibility to gather in small groups.
- Create a plan for dividing your chapter into small groups of three to five members. If facilitating the program virtually, be prepared to use Zoom to utilize the breakout

room option, with a plan to potentially use different Zoom links to ensure groups are given the maximum number of breakout rooms.

- For option two of the introduction, a flipchart and writing utensil will be needed.
- Always ensure you are prepared to accommodate your members' needs so the program is fully accessible and all members can meaningfully engage with the content.

Getting started:

- The facilitator should walk through this seminar prior to presenting to make sure they're comfortable with the material.
- Talking points are indicated with quotation marks. Please use these as speaking guidelines but be sure to make the presentation your own.
- Facilitation instructions are indicated with italicized font. These are hints you might find helpful when administering the material. Most importantly, have fun! The more excited and engaged you are, the more participants will be.
- If you are holding this workshop during a chapter meeting, or another time where cell phones aren't usually allowed, let participants know they will need them for this activity.

Introduction: Being a Better Listener

Part 1: Being a Better Listener

Part 2: Being a Better Listener

Conclusion: Being a Better Listener

Participant Activities: Being a Better Listener

Introduction: Being a Better Listener

Listening

“Hi everyone! I'm excited to talk to you today about ways you can be a better listener. We're going to start by setting some "ground rules" for this seminar. This will help us all be on the same page. What ground rules should we put in place to be the most present and engaged today?”

If these are not mentioned while your members brainstorm ground rules, be sure to share them:

- “Make sure you’re staying off your phone unless asked to use it for an activity. If you need to check your phone during this time, please let me know.
- Remember that everyone draws from a different set of experiences, so it's important to listen to understand.
- Respect your sisters by actively listening when they’re speaking. Try to avoid side conversations and stay focused on whoever is speaking.
- Remember, this seminar will be more beneficial if you make a conscious effort to think critically and actively participate.”

Next, complete one of these two icebreakers! Choose whichever option works better for your chapter.

“Let's get started!”

OPTION 1: PARTNER DISCUSSION

OPTION 2: GROUP DISCUSSION

This option is better for small to medium chapters.

“We're going to start today's seminar with some partner discussions. After you've found a partner, one member is going to introduce themselves to their partner for two minutes. You can talk about where you're from, family, major, whatever details about yourself you want to include. After two minutes, you will switch roles. The speaker will become the listener. The goal is to retain as much information about your partner as you can.

Ready? Let's begin.”

Give 2 minutes for the first speakers to introduce themselves.

“Okay that was two minutes. Let's switch.”

Wait 2 minutes and then bring everyone back for a brief discussion. Discuss what made this exercise easy or hard.

“Okay now that everyone has had a chance to speak and listen, let's discuss. Did you find this exercise to be easy? What made it hard?”

Take a few responses here.

OPTION 1: PARTNER DISCUSSION

OPTION 2: GROUP DISCUSSION

This option is better for medium to large chapters.

“I'm sure there have been times when we've been attentive listeners and times when we may not have been as focused. As a group, let's list some examples of listening skills. I'll write down our responses.

Speaking from your own experience, what are some poor listening skills you have emulated? Or what has prevented you from actively listening?”

Write down five or six responses. If you need to get the conversation going, suggest any of the following examples: looking at your watch, interrupting, avoiding eye contact, looking bored or impatient, tapping your foot or fidgeting, finishing the speaker's sentences.

“Again, speaking from your own experience, what are some good listening skills you have emulated? What are you doing to show you are listening to and understanding the speaker?”

Write down five or six responses and write them down. If you need to get the conversation going, suggest any of the following examples: focusing, asking questions, paying attention to body language, paraphrasing/summarizing, expressing empathy.

“Keep these skills in mind, especially the ones that relate to you, and think of how you can improve upon your listening skills.”

CONTINUE

Part 1: Being a Better Listener

Emotional Validation

“For this next part, we’re going to talk about emotional validation. For our conversation, we’ll define emotional validation as “acknowledging and accepting a person’s inner experience, thoughts, feelings and behaviors as valid.”

You don’t have to agree with someone or even agree with their emotional response to provide emotional validation. Emotional validation is about letting the other person know you understand how they’re feeling. Otherwise, emotional invalidation can occur, which is when a person’s emotional experiences are rejected, ignored or judged.

Let's talk about the three steps to validating emotions in conversation.”

Steps to Emotional Validation

Step 1

Step 1: Identify and Acknowledge the Emotion

Acknowledge the emotion the person is having. This can be hard if they have not clearly communicated their feelings, so you might have to ask them, or guess and then ask if you're on target.

Step 2

Step 2: Acknowledge the Source of the Emotion

The next step is to identify the situation or cue that triggered the emotion. Ask the person what is causing their response. What's making them feel this way?

Step 3

Step 3: Validate the Emotion

Validate their feelings by communicating that you accept what they are feeling, even if you don't follow their reasoning or agree with what they're sharing.

source: Salters-Pedneault, What is Emotional Validation?

Review the content in advance and determine if option 1 or option 2 is better for your chapter's current knowledge level.

OPTION 1: GROUP DISCUSSION

OPTION 2: QUOTE ANALYSIS

This option is better suited for chapters looking to share personal experiences with the group.

Answer the discussion questions below as a group.

“ Do these steps feel easy to execute during conversation?”

Take a few responses.

“ What do you think will be easy? Where could you need more practice? ”

Take a few responses.

“ Have you ever felt emotionally invalidated? How did it make you feel? ”

Take a few responses.

“ Have you ever emotionally invalidated someone?”

Take a few responses.

“ How can you personally improve your emotional validation, either as the speaker or listener?”

Take a few responses.

“ How can you emotionally validate someone with whom you share an opposing opinion?”

Take a few responses.

OPTION 1: GROUP DISCUSSION

OPTION 2: QUOTE ANALYSIS

This option is better suited for chapters with members who may not want to share personal experiences.

“We're going to read a quote together, then you will discuss it with a partner and answer some questions.”

You or a volunteer can read the quote from Kate Murphey from Ineffable Living:

“ In social situations, we pass around a phone to look at pictures instead of describing what we've seen or experienced. Rather than finding shared humor in conversation, we show one another internet memes and YouTube videos. And if there is a difference of opinion, Google is the arbiter. If someone tells a story that takes longer than thirty seconds, heads bow, not in contemplation but to read texts, check sports scores, or see what's trending online. The ability to listen to anyone has been replaced by the capacity to shut out everyone, particularly those who disagree with us or don't get to the point fast enough. ”

Discussion questions:

- *What are your thoughts on this quote? Have you seen this play out in your daily life?*

- *Have you ever felt emotionally invalidated? How did it make you feel?*
- *Have you ever emotionally invalidated someone?*
- *How can you personally improve your emotional validation, either as the speaker or listener?*
- *How can you emotionally validate someone with whom you share an opposing opinion?*

Give the groups a few minutes to discuss the questions.

“Ok everyone, let's come back together. Does anyone want to share how the quote resonated with you or some other highlights from your conversations? ”

Take a few responses.

CONTINUE

Part 2: Being a Better Listener

Practice

“Now that we have an understanding of Emotional Validation, let's practice!”

OPTION 1: INTERPERSONAL PRACT...

OPTION 2: GROUP EXERCISE

This is option is better for chapters who want to practice emotional validation one on one.

“In pairs, have a conversation where each partner takes a different stance on a topic of your choice. Use what we've learned about emotional validation to validate your partner and to keep the conversation going for five minutes. You can discuss topics that are simple or deeper--whatever you feel comfortable with.”

After five minutes, bring everyone back for a brief discussion.

“How did the conversation go?”

Take a few responses.

“What did you find challenging or easy about this exercise?”

Take a few response here.

“If you used all the time allotted, what kept the conversation going? ”

Take a few responses.

“If you didn't use all the time allotted, why not? ”

Take a few responses.

OPTION 1: INTERPERSONAL PRACT...

OPTION 2: GROUP EXERCISE

This option is better for chapters who want to engage in a small group activity.

“Let's get into groups of 3-5.”

Wait a moment for everyone to find their groups.

“Now that we're in our small groups, we're going to practice emotional validation with each other. This exercise will ensure all members can express their views on a topic of their choosing and that the conversation lasts five minutes.

There are two rules that must be followed:

1. Each person must speak once before anyone can speak a second (or third) time.
2. If someone asks a question, someone else must answer their question before another comment can be made.

Now that we know the rules, here are the steps for the exercise:

Step one: Identify a group leader who will make sure the rules are followed and who will help summarize the conversations.

Step two: One person begins by saying something about the topic; the others listen attentively and intentionally.

Step three: Another individual asks a follow-up question or comments about what they heard.

Repeat steps two and three until everyone has spoken at least twice, or for the full five minutes allotted.”

After five minutes bring the group back together for a discussion. Ask for volunteers. Try to have at least two groups share their experiences.

“Can the group leader summarize how the conversation went? Can you share any insights you or your group may have? What patterns emerged?”

Source: Bellarmine University's guidelines for active listening.

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Conclusion: Being a Better Listener

“Thank you for all your participation and vulnerability today. I hope you learned something new about listening, emotional validation and how to apply it to your everyday life. Listening is a fundamental part of communication and as we've today, with practice it can be easy to implement. I want to make sure our conversations about listening and emotional validation don't end after this seminar.

Everyone think of one way you can improve your listening or emotional validation skills. Write it down so we can hold ourselves accountable.

By our next chapter meeting, I want everyone to practice that skill with someone outside of this chapter. Maybe it's with someone you don't know as well, or someone who has a different opinion than you. Think about how you can still validate them without agreeing, judging or offering unsolicited advice. Take note of your experience and let us know how it went at the next chapter meeting.

Thank you again, for your time today!”

Survey

Provide the following link to four members of your chapter, one from each class. You and those four members will complete the *Leading with Values* seminar survey to provide feedback to Pi Beta Phi.

pibetaphi.org/lwvfeedback

References

- Hadiah. (2022). Ineffable Living. <https://ineffableliving.com/how-to-validate-someone/>
- Bryant, Adam. Be a Better Listener. New York Times.
<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/be-a-better-listener>
- Salters-Pedneault, Kristalyn. (2022). What is Emotional Validation? verywellmind.
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-emotional-validation-425336>
- Bellarmine University. https://www.bellarmino.edu/docs/default-source/faculty-development-docs/06-active-listening.pdf?sfvrsn=1db29481_2

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Participant Activities: Being a Better Listener

Part 1 Option 1: Group Discussion

Steps to Emotional Validation

Question 1

Step 1

Acknowledge the emotion the person is having. This can be hard if they have not clearly communicated their feelings, so you might have to ask them, or guess and then ask if you're on target.

Question 2

Step 2

The next step is to identify the situation or cue that triggered the emotion. Ask the person what is causing their response. What's making them feel this way?

Question 3

Step 3

Validate their feelings by communicating that you accept what they are feeling, even if you don't follow their reasoning or agree with what they're sharing.

Part 1 Option 2: Quote Analysis

"In social situations, we pass around a phone to look at pictures instead of describing what we've seen or experienced. Rather than finding shared humor in conversation, we show one another internet memes and YouTube videos. And if there is a difference of opinion, Google is the arbiter. If someone tells a story that takes longer than thirty seconds, heads bow, not in contemplation but to read texts, check sports scores, or see what's trending online. The ability to listen to anyone has been replaced by the capacity to shut out everyone, particularly those who disagree with us or don't get to the point fast enough."

- Kate Murphey

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How have you seen this play out in your daily life?

3

Have you ever felt emotionally invalidated? How did it make you feel?

4

Have you ever emotionally invalidated someone? How did it make them feel?

5

How can you personally improve your emotional validation, either as the speaker or listener?

6

How can you emotionally validate someone with whom you share an opposing opinion?

Part 2 Option 2: Group Exercise

Option 2 Group Exercise

Rules

1. Each person must speak once before anyone can speak a second (or third) time.
2. If someone asks a question, someone else must answer their question before another comment can be made.

Step 1

Step 1

Identify a group leader who will make sure the rules are followed and who will help summarize the conversations.

Step 2

Step 2

One person begins by saying something about the topic; the others listen attentively and intentionally.

Step 3

Step 3

Another individual asks a follow-up question or comments about what they heard.

Repeat steps two and three until everyone has spoken at least twice, or for the full five minutes.

Thank you for engaging in this seminar, today! Please fill out this survey to give feedback on this *Leading with Values* seminar: Being a Better Listener

[Complete the Leading with Values survey.](#)

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