



EXPRESS CARE

So You Think You Can Listen?

Paying Attention to Express Care

Description

In pairs, participants take turns sharing about themselves and listening. Listeners share positive words about the sharer.

Objective

- Build and strengthen relationships among participants
- Build and strengthen relationships between participants and leaders
- Deepen understanding of the element of Express Care

Connecting with the Framework

We know from our research that listening—or as young people have said, “really paying attention when we are together”—and saying words of encouragement are foundational for building care in a relationship.

Planning and Preparation

 **Participants:** Any size group; works best with groups of 8 or more

 **Materials:**

- Paper
- Masking tape
- Markers
- Timer (or a clock or smart phone to time one minute)

 **Time:** 30 minutes

 **Set up:**

- Write the following questions on a screen or board where all participants can see them:
 - What are you proud of?
 - What do you love to do or learn about?
 - What is an obstacle you have overcome?
 - If you had a million dollars, what would you do with it?
 - What is something you’d like to accomplish in the future?

Facilitator Notes:

- This is a fun, fast-paced, and often loud, activity. Many people are talking at once. If anyone in your group has issues with sensory overload, consider giving them a role of time keeper.
- If you are worried that your participants may have trouble thinking of things to write on their partner's back, provide some prompts. For example, they could write "I think you are [positive trait] because you [something they do or talked about]."

Facilitator Instructions

1. If participants have been introduced to the Developmental Relationships Framework, let them know that through this activity we will be practicing the element of Express Care. Let participants know that each person is going to share something about themselves, and that everyone else in the group is going to show that they care about that person by listening and writing positive, encouraging words for that person.
2. Use the masking tape to tape a sheet of paper on each participant's back. Make sure each person also has a marker or pencil.
3. Ask participants to stand in two concentric circles with those in the inner circle facing those in the outer circle. For a large group, you may break into two pairs of concentric circles.
4. Ask participants to identify a partner in the other circle. If you have an odd number, the facilitator should participate so that each participant has a partner.
5. Tell the participants that the partner on the inside circle should tell their partner as much about themselves as possible in one minute. Tell them that they can talk about the questions you've posted, or they can talk about other things that seem more interesting and important to them. Tell the participants that the role of the partner on the outside circle is to just listen attentively without interrupting. Put the timer on for one minute.
6. After one minute is up, instruct the partners standing on the inside circle to turn around so that their partners standing in the outside circle are looking at the papers taped to their backs. Ask the partner standing in the outside circle to write one positive word or short phrase about the person. Remind the group that sarcastic or negative things should not be written on their partner's back. They should not say what they've written or sign their name.



Putting It Into Practice

If you had an even number and did not participate in the exercise, share some things about yourself and invite participants to write on a post-it something positive about you. We as facilitators can use positive encouragement too! Continue to remind participants that listening to each other demonstrates care and they are always welcome to share things about themselves with the group.

7. Tell the participants to avoid looking at what has been written on their backs during this process. Tell them that they will be able to see what has been written at the end of the activity.
8. Now reverse the exchange. The partner standing in the outside circle should now tell the partner standing on the inside circle about themselves for one minute, after which the partner standing on the inside of the circle should write a word or phrase on the back of the partner standing in the outside circle.
9. Ask those in the outer circle to shift two places to the left so that everyone has a new partner. Repeat the steps above.
10. Rotate again, until everyone has partnered with at least 4-6 different people. (If time is limited, you can reduce the number of rounds.)
11. Have the participants remove the papers from their backs and read to themselves.

Reflect Discuss these questions as a large group:

- How did it feel to talk about yourself for a full minute? What went through your mind as you did it?
- How often do you listen closely to others and really hear what they're saying?
- Was it hard to just listen to someone else? What would have made it easier?
- How did it feel to read the positive words that others wrote on your back?
- What did you learn about perceptions that other people have of you?
- What is something new you learned about someone else?
- How might we remember to learn new things about each other in the coming weeks? How might that affect our group? Use answers to this question to inform the activity in "Taking Action" below.

Taking Action (optional) Make a commitment as a group to keep sharing and learning new things about one another in the coming weeks. Give participants the opportunity to share something about themselves or answer an ice-breaker question at the start or end of each session. Invite participants to keep the sheet and put it somewhere visible like a locker or in their room at home to remind them of the positive things others see in them.