

# Social and Emotional Learning Resources: Leadership

Here are several resources you can use to help practice leadership. If you are a parent, you can help your child complete these activities at home. If you are a teacher, you can deliver these lessons to students in online classrooms. Remember that you can also take the time to complete these activities yourself.

- Active Listening Lesson
- Optimism Lesson
- Assertiveness Lesson
- Encouraging Others Lesson

We want to hear from you! If you use these lessons, we would like to know if you found them helpful and what else we can do to improve them for future use. To provide feedback, please visit the link below.

Link: [https://act.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bdBPIwFOWuom7hr](https://act.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bdBPIwFOWuom7hr)

# Active Listening

**Objective:** To understand how being a good listener is key to communicating with others.

**Background:** Being a good listener is one of the most important aspects of communication. By actively listening, one can genuinely process and comprehend the information that others are communicating. Active listening involves fully focusing on what others are saying. There are many ways to be a good listener.

**Activity:**

Below is a checklist of best practices for active listening. You can give this list to your students to read over and help them become familiar with the qualities of active listening.

Next, have your student set up a 1:1 conversation with another individual. This can be a family member in the student's home, a video chat with a friend or family member, or a call or video chat with another student in the class.

Have students engage in conversation with their selected conversation partners. At the end of the conversation, have students complete the checklists and reflect on whether or not they practiced active listening during their conversation. The questions following the checklists will prompt students to reflect on how they did with active listening, and if there are aspects they can improve on next time.

You can have students repeat this activity regularly and have them do the reflection questions each time. Students can aim to improve on their active listening techniques each time they engage in a new conversation.

### Active Listening Checklist

Pay attention. Look at the speaker and try to maintain eye contact.	<input type="radio"/>
Make sure your facial expression conveys interest and concern, not criticism or impatience. Keep your arms uncrossed; crossing them could indicate to the speaker that you aren't interested in hearing what he or she has to say.	<input type="radio"/>
Be open-minded. Don't make judgments about the speaker while he or she is speaking. Just try to listen to the words he or she is saying.	<input type="radio"/>
Stay focused. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by other things, such as your cellphone or a TV show, while you are having a conversation.	<input type="radio"/>
Don't interrupt. Let the speaker finish his or her sentence before you take your turn to talk.	<input type="radio"/>
Ask questions to make sure you are understanding what the speaker is saying (but try not to interrupt!).	<input type="radio"/>
You can also use your own words to clarify the speaker's message that he or she has just communicated. For example, if a student says, "I haven't made any good friends at this school; no one likes me," a response from an active listener could be, "Are you feeling left out here?"	<input type="radio"/>
Personal biases can affect how we receive what a speaker is saying. If we are angry, prejudiced, or in any other way biased about the speaker, we may not allow ourselves to objectively listen to what the speaker is saying. Try to put these aside.	<input type="radio"/>
Avoid daydreaming, thinking about other things, or letting your mind wander.	<input type="radio"/>
Avoid rehearsing your own response while the speaker is still talking.	<input type="radio"/>
Respect the opinions and feelings of the speaker, even if you disagree.	<input type="radio"/>
Ask the speaker how he or she feels. Or, if you notice an emotion (happiness, sadness, etc.), tell the speaker that you noticed him or her showing this emotion (e.g., "You look happy about that").	<input type="radio"/>
Be slow to offer advice or solutions, and ask the other person if he or she would be open to suggestions before you offer. If asked to do so, you can offer advice openly, in the form of a question. You could say, "Have you looked into...?" or "Have you thought about...?" Avoid giving advice that includes the word "should," as it implies you know better than the speaker.	<input type="radio"/>
Ask questions that may help the speaker consider different consequences of his or her decisions.	<input type="radio"/>
Give feedback. Nod or make short responses occasionally so the speaker knows you are paying attention.	<input type="radio"/>
If you are confused, say so. Asking questions will help you to understand and will also help the speaker clarify his or her thoughts and feelings.	<input type="radio"/>

Reflection Questions for After Conversation

1) Do you think you did a good job actively listening to your partner? Why or why not?

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2) What are some specific things that you think you did well?

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3) Is there anything that you did that could have made your partner feel like you were not listening to him or her?

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4) Is there anything you would like to try the next time you have a conversation with someone?

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# Optimism

**Objective:** To learn how to be optimistic even in trying circumstances.

**Background:** Great leaders are often optimistic and enthusiastic. They have a way of looking at the bright side of things. Optimism entails looking at the positive side of things instead of the negative side and being confident that the future will turn out well.

Optimism is the opposite of pessimism. Pessimism is a persistent state in which people tend to perceive events as negative. In the classic metaphor, pessimists are those who view the glass as being half-empty, while optimists view the glass as being half-full. Whether you have an optimistic outlook or pessimistic outlook is up to you. The writer Karr once said, “We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorns have roses.” The table below describes each outlook.

Pessimistic Outlook	Optimistic Outlook
Positive events are short-term, but negative events have lasting consequences.	Negative events are short-term, but positive events have lasting consequences.
Unhappiness and disappointment are normal.	Pleasant events and successes are normal.
When bad things happen, there is rarely a happy ending.	Bad things can sometimes happen, but things usually turn out well in the end.
<i>Example 1: I wish these roses didn't have thorns because I keep getting cut.</i>	<i>Example 1: I'm glad these thorny stems have roses on them because they are beautiful.</i>
<i>Example 2: The COVID-19 pandemic situation is never going to end.</i>	<i>Example 2: Even if this situation is taking some time, it will eventually run out of steam and things will return to normal.</i>

There are some things one can do to become more optimistic. Some of these things can be done every day. However, these exercises can be particularly useful during trying times such as these, when global events may tend to leave everyone feeling pessimistic.

You can have students complete the two activities below to help them practice having an optimistic outlook. Before doing so, explain to them the difference between optimism and pessimism and ensure that they understand the meaning of optimism.

### Activity 1: Find the Positives in Every Situation

It is possible to find something good about almost any situation, no matter how bad it is. To complete this exercise, have students think of some bad situations that have happened to them in the last couple of months. Older students can write this down in the space provided, and younger students can either draw pictures or describe each situation to you. For each situation, have students think of a positive that happened even in the bad situation.

Bad thing that happened	Positive consequence
<i>Example 1: I missed the due date for turning in an important school project.</i>	<i>I learned that it is important to start big projects early, and now I work more efficiently than I did before.</i>
<i>Example 2: I have to stay home every day because of COVID-19.</i>	<i>I have been spending more quality time with my family.</i>
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	

### Activity 2: Give Yourself Credit

This activity will help students attribute their successes to their own actions. First, have students think about some good things that have happened to them over the last few months. Older students can write this down in the space provided, and younger students can either draw pictures or describe each situation to you. For each good thing, have students think about something he or she did to make that good thing happen. Have students focus specifically on actions they took and had control over. This activity promotes both optimism and agency.

Good thing that happened to me	What I did to make this happen
<i>Example 1: I got a lead role in the school play.</i>	<i>I put hard work and effort into preparing for my audition and rehearsed my lines many times.</i>
<i>Example 2: Everyone in my household is safe and no one has COVID-19.</i>	<i>I have been practicing social distancing and washing my hands regularly.</i>
1)	
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	

# Assertiveness

**Objective:** To learn the difference between assertive, aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive communication

**Background:** There are various communication styles. Some communication styles enable effective communication and foster positive relationships, but others may be ineffective and can be problematic for relationship development. This lesson details four different communication styles: assertive, aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive communication. In general, assertive communication is the most effective method. You can use this lesson to teach students the differences between each communication style and work with them to generate examples of each one.

## When you are assertive, you ...

- Maintain your needs, wants, and desires without feeling that they are above the needs of others
- Communicate directly using a calm tone
- Feel free to openly express your feelings and opinions and allow others to do the same
- Feel that you are equal to others
- Use a firm but calm voice
- Avoid yelling and making threats to others
- Clearly express how you feel and why you are feeling that way
- Avoid put-downs, insults, and judgments
- Maintain eye contact (when culturally appropriate)
- Show that you are willing to listen

Assertive communication is the most effective because it enables you to communicate about your needs and ensure that they are being met, but without disrespecting others. Not all communication styles are as effective. You can also share with students what aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive forms of communication look like.



**When you are aggressive, you...**

- Feel your needs are more important than others'
- Speak loudly or yell and sometimes use harsh or abusive language
- Blame, accuse, or use sarcasm to put others down
- Are not interested in listening to the other person's needs

**When you are passive, you...**

- Do not express your needs, wants, or desires
- Speak softly or avoid saying what you want
- Often look down or avoid eye contact (when culturally appropriate)
- Put others' needs above your own needs

**When you are passive-aggressive, you...**

- Feel your needs must be met and will do anything to ensure they are
- May use sarcasm or put others down
- Use indirect communication to avoid saying what you want to directly
- May manipulate others or play the victim to get your way

**Activity:**

Once students understand the differences between the four communication styles, ask them to respond to the given situations using each of the different communication styles. Students can either write down or role play the responses they come up with. Examples for possible situations are below. You can also have students come up with situations they are experiencing in their own lives and then have them work in groups to come up with possible responses.

Situation 1: You do not make the starting lineup in your softball game, even though your coach told you the day before that you would be starting in the game.

<b>Assertive response:</b>	
<b>Aggressive response:</b>	
<b>Passive response:</b>	
<b>Passive-aggressive response:</b>	

Situation 2: Each morning, you have your online class meeting from 9am – 11am. You asked your sister to give you space and quiet time during these meetings so that you can focus on your school work, but she keeps disrupting you.

<b>Assertive response:</b>	
<b>Aggressive response:</b>	
<b>Passive response:</b>	
<b>Passive-aggressive response:</b>	

Your own situation:

<b>Assertive response:</b>	
<b>Aggressive response:</b>	
<b>Passive response:</b>	
<b>Passive-aggressive response:</b>	

Last, have students think about two situations that they have recently experienced. Ask them to reflect on how they communicated and responded to these situations, and to consider whether their responses were assertive, aggressive, passive, or passive-aggressive. For older students, you can have them fill in their responses in the chart below. You can have younger students draw pictures to describe their situations or have them tell you about each situation.

Situation	How did you respond?	Was your response assertive, aggressive, passive, or passive-aggressive?	How could you have responded more assertively?
<b>Situation 1:</b>			
<b>Situation 2:</b>			

# Encouraging Others

**Objective:** To learn about the benefits of encouraging others and to practice doing so.

**Background:** There is an old saying, “When you help someone up a hill, you find yourself closer to the top.” This saying speaks to the benefit of helping or encouraging others. Encouragement can be defined as “the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope.”

One highly cited theory suggests there are therapeutic benefits of encouraging others, and empirical research findings lead to the same conclusion. For example:

- Providing emotional support to others has a positive impact on self-esteem and feeling as if you have control over your life, which in turn predict increased physical and mental quality of life.
- Arguably, the most important life outcome is longevity, or how long a person lives for. In one study, it was shown that individuals who provided physical or emotional support to others lived longer than those who did not. Interestingly, *receiving* support had no effect on how long people lived, but *giving* support led to people living longer.

**Activity:**

- First, explain the above to your students. Ensure that they understand what encouragement means and that they understand that it can benefit them.
- Ask your student to think of five people who they think could use some encouragement. These people can be classmates, siblings, friends, family members, hospital employees – just about anyone.
- Have the student create an encouraging message to each of the five people they identified. Students can use a variety of media forms to create these messages. Email, text message, drawing a picture, writing a letter or card, or making a video are some possibilities. When students are crafting their messages, try to have their encouragement be relevant to each individual’s current situation (e.g., if they are writing to an uncle who lost his job, or to a hospital worker who is working around the clock to fight COVID-19).
- Last, help your students to deliver their encouraging messages.