Active Listening

Steps

1) Try to understand.

Be present. Try and not get distracted. Distractions can be mental (focussing on what you want to say next) or physical (sounds or sights). Shift your focus and be present with your partner.

Have an open mind. Understand what the speaker has to say. Try and take their perspective. Avoid forming judgements or opinions while the other person is speaking.

2) Show you are listening.

- **Maintain eye contact.** Face the person, make friendly & clear eye contact.
- **Maintain an open posture.** Do not cross your arms, sit or stand straight, and show a friendly smile.
- **Use non-verbal and verbal cues**. Try and match the speaker's affect by using both your voice and body language in an appropriate manner.

*Verbal:* "mhh" - "ahhh" - "that's interesting" - "I understand" - "I see" - "I agree"

Non-Verbal: nodding - reacting to emotional content (e.g. smiling) - friendly gestures

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3) Giving space.

Wait. Try waiting one second between asking a question and receiving a response as well as waiting at least one second after the peer has responded. This will give each other the space to finish thoughts, reflect on what has been said, and listen to each other truly.

Appreciate. Appreciate what the other person shared. Especially when it might have been difficult for them to voice their concerns or feedback it is important to acknowledge them for doing so.
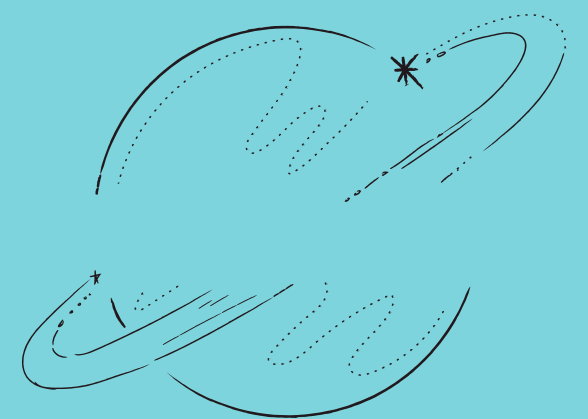
4) Encourage sharing.

Use reflections: Paraphrase or summarize in your own words what has been said. Try and include emotional content, even if it was only conveyed through body language.

Speaker: *With the task that I have been given I would really appreciate a little more help from you. It is a lot to do for one person.*
Listener: *So what I hear you say is that you are exhausted and unsure whether you can manage this. I really hear this and I will make sure to support you more.*

Ask open-ended questions: These encourage open communication and elaboration. Instead of Yes and No answers they show the speaker that you are interested in what they have to say.

How did it feel to ___? Can you tell me more about ___? What did you think when ____?

How do you ___? What do you like/dislike about ___? What would you propose about ___?