



## Information Sheet: Listening Skills for Conflict Situations

### The importance of listening:

When we find ourselves in conflict, we can experience all sorts of difficult feelings – for example anger, fear, or disappointment – which may make it difficult for us to listen. However, listening to the other person is extremely important if we are to find any kind of resolution to our disagreement. Sometimes arguments go on and on, not because people want you to agree with them, but because they think you haven't heard or understood their point of view. Next time you have a difference of opinion, try to sum up the other person's point of view in your own words before you state your own opinion.

### When listening, it can be useful to:

**Find a private place:** 'Shall we talk about this in another room where we won't get interrupted?'

**Ask open questions:** 'Tell me more about...', 'Could you explain what happened?'

**Acknowledge:** 'I can see why you feel so strongly.', 'That sounds really important to you.'

**Check:** 'I'm not sure I understand', 'Am I right in thinking you said...?'

**Appreciate the other person's efforts:** 'Thank you for telling me.'

**Empathise:** 'You seem to be very angry', 'I can understand why you are worried about this', 'I think this has been very difficult for you.'

### If you want to resolve the conflict, it is *not* usually useful to:

**Order:** 'You must...', 'Don't...'

**Threaten:** 'You had better...', 'If you don't...'

**Preach:** 'You should...', 'When I was your age...', 'Here is where things are going wrong.'

**Judge:** 'You don't seem to care very much.'

**Excuse:** 'When you're less tired, you'll see...'

**Patronise:** 'Don't worry, you'll feel better later.'

**Analyse:** 'I believe you haven't been able to admit this to yourself.'

**Interrogate:** 'What were you doing there? Who else was there? How long for?'

**Dismiss:** 'This really is not the sort of thing I like to hear about.'

### **The benefits of listening:**

Most of us are rarely listened to well, or for long enough; if we were we would have lower stress levels and be more readily able to work out clear solutions to our problems. After a good 'listening to' people are more likely to feel that they can resolve difficulties by themselves. Listening is a skill we all possess, and with practice we can improve our skills to enable us to resolve problems and disagreements more effectively.

### **How CCL can help:**

We offer brief counselling (six sessions) to people, aged 16 and over, living in Ryedale and, where appropriate, in Scarborough. These sessions can help you focus on difficulties in relationships and communication. You can be referred to our free service by your GP or any NHS worker or you can self-refer to our Co-payment Counselling Scheme.

### **Other sources of information:**

'People Skills' by Robert Bolton; 'A Woman in your Own Right' by Anne Dickson. Or log on to [www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm/](http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm/)