

Training Exercise to Practice Listening

Triad Listening (20 minutes)—The purpose of this activity is to practice listening and recognize biases.

Divide the group into triads of people who don't know each other well, if possible. Assign roles:

- ⊕ A Listener who will record the listening (what is said).
- ⊕ A Listener who will record the emotions and what is not said.
- ⊕ A person to be interviewed.

If the group is smaller than six people, this activity can be done as a whole allowing time for each person to participate in all three roles.

Round 1 (5 minutes)—Have the Listeners ask the following questions:

- ⊕ If your congregation disappeared tomorrow, what would the neighborhood miss?
- ⊕ What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- ⊕ How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

Round 2 (5 Minutes)—Change roles and have the Listeners ask the following questions:

- ⊕ What are three reasons people in the neighborhood would want to come to your congregation?
- ⊕ What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- ⊕ How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

Round 3 (5 Minutes)—Change roles and have the Listeners ask the following questions:

- ⊕ What is your congregation known for in the community?
- ⊕ What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- ⊕ How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

Quickly debrief some of the “aha” moments of this listening process. This can be done by asking a few of the questions below between every round or by asking them at the end of all three rounds.

Reflection questions

- ⊕ Were there times when the focus was on the congregation although the question was about the neighborhood? Why is that?
- ⊕ What surprised you?
- ⊕ What did you hear that was new?
- ⊕ What did you notice about the emotions or behavior of the person you interviewed and what was not being said?
- ⊕ What needs consistently surfaced?
- ⊕ What solutions consistently surfaced?
- ⊕ How did the needs include a partnership with the congregation? With the neighborhood? With other nonprofits, religious organizations or local businesses?

Naming biases

Take a step back and notice the times when the group avoided thinking about people from different cultures, ethnic groups, socio-economic groups, ages, etc. Have an open conversation about your default behavior and listening filters. Encourage journaling about this.



3 Rounds with each person in the triad taking a turn at being:

- A Listener who will record the listening (what is said)
- A Listener who will record the emotions and what is not said
- A person to be interviewed

Round 1

- If your congregation disappeared tomorrow, what would the neighborhood miss?
- What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

Round 2

- What are three reasons people in the neighborhood would want to come to your congregation?
- What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?

Round 3

- What is your congregation known for in the community?
- What are the biggest needs in your neighborhood?
- How would you solve one of these needs if you had no limitations?



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