



## The Constructivist Listening Dyad

*Adapted from the National Coalition for Equity in Education by Victor Cary*

### **Purpose**

To create a safe space to become better at listening and talking in depth. Constructivist listening dyads help us as we work through feelings, thoughts, and beliefs that sometimes produce anger, passivity, undermine confidence, or cause interference in relationships with students or colleagues.

**Time allotted:** 2 to 30 minutes

**Group format:** Pairs.

**Supplies:** A timer

**Facilitation tips:** Talk about the purpose of a constructivist listening dyad.

The simplest form of doing constructivist listening is a **dyad**, which is the exchange of constructivist listening between two people....

I agree to listen to and think about you for a fixed period of time in exchange for you doing the same for me. I keep in my mind that my listening is for your benefit so I do not ask questions for my information.

Start with two minutes — at first it may seem difficult. But participants, over the course of time, may work their way up to 5-8 minutes and more each. *Remind participants that the purpose of a constructivist listening dyad is that the listening is for the benefit of the talker.* This is an essential point to access the usefulness and power of a constructivist listening dyad.

### **Guidelines for Constructivist Listening:**

- 1) Each person is given equal time to talk. (Everyone deserves to be listened to.)
- 2) The listener does not interpret, paraphrase, analyze, give advice or break in with a personal story. (People can solve their own problems.)
- 3) Confidentiality is maintained. (People need to know they can be completely authentic.)
- 4) The talker does not criticize or complain about a listener(s) or about mutual colleagues during their time to talk. (A person cannot listen well when she/he is feeling attacked or defensive.)

### **The Activity:**

1. Each person will have two minutes or more to respond to a prompt. It is very useful to scaffold the prompts.  
Ex: When is the last time you remembered being fully listened too? How did it feel?  
Growing up, what was your experience as a learner? What felt supportive? What interfered with your learning?  
How did race, class or gender impact your experience as a learner in school?

### **Reflection questions following the activity:**

- What came up for you using this structure? What came up for you reflecting on the prompt?
- What worked for you? What was difficult for you?
- What purpose do you think it might serve?
- When could it be used?