

WEEK 3

Spark Your Social Awareness

We practice communication daily in a variety of different forms. In fact, we've spent years honing our reading, writing and speaking skills in order to understand and be better understood. But have we spent as much time listening as we have in speaking? The Greek philosopher Epicurus is credited with saying, "we have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." When in a conversation with others, do you have a clear understanding of your behavior patterns? Are you attentive and focused on the words being said, or are you listening with the intent to respond rather than to understand?



IGNITE

Take some time to reflect on your own personal style of communication. Are there areas that come to mind that need a little focused attention and practice?

Active Listening

Listen with your full attention and the intent to gain awareness and understanding of the person speaking. Let go of any preconceived assumptions, and set aside disruptive thoughts so the other person's words can soak in. Try not to interrupt others with words, actions or what may be best to do or say next. Rather, consciously choose to listen with an open mind, focusing on the words being said, tone and body language.

Empathy

Empathy is simply putting yourself in another person's shoes and seeing the world as they see it. It is showing awareness of their feelings and making sure not to invalidate, diminish or judge them. Try cultivating your empathy further by challenging your own preconceptions and prejudices to discover commonalities. See the world through another's point of view.

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are used in our daily interactions with others and are closely tied to our emotional intelligence. Are you aware of the emotional impact you have on others? Does the way you carry yourself and sound come across as intimidating or inviting? It is important to be aware of how our behavior in different situations can lead others to respond negatively or to relax and feel comfortable?