

## HOW TO MODEL ACTIVE LISTENING

- **Be present:** Make sure that you are present in the conversation by giving yourself enough time, putting your phone away, maintaining eye contact (and being aware of other body language cues) so that the person you are speaking to knows that they have your full attention.
- **Be open:** Being empathetic, positive and non-judgmental can help create an open and trusting space to have this conversation.
- **Listen uncritically:** Your role is to listen, so be patient while people collect their thoughts, be encouraging if they are apprehensive, and adopt an accepting attitude by leaving your assumptions at the door.
- **Echo back:** Be sure to echo sentiments back to the person you are talking to, to be sure that you understand them accurately. Don't be afraid to ask them for clarification, but be careful not to paraphrase them too much, or you might change the meaning of what they are trying to say.
- **Provide feedback:** It is ok to provide feedback and ask follow up questions to the person who is speaking – these are supposed to be two-way conversations. It is also ok to not have all of the answers to their questions – you can always get back to them with more information.
- **Acknowledge feelings:** Feedback can come with a variety of feelings and emotions attached to it that can charge the conversation. It is important to acknowledge the person's feelings, validating them, without agreeing or disagreeing with them. For example: "I understand that you feel \_\_\_\_\_."
- **Take in criticism:** Not everyone is going to share positive feedback, and you will very likely hear negative things and direct criticism of the project. It is ok to acknowledge weaknesses or mistakes that have been made in the process, and to use this as a chance to seek suggestions for how to do things differently.