

Validating Sparks



grades: 3-4



35 minutes

“Listening is about being present, not just about being quiet.”
– Krista Tippett

Lesson Summary

Students consider the many feelings that they experience each day. They discuss how we all have emotions, how different people experience different feelings, and how they can support someone—and validate their emotions—by listening to them. Students then practice specific skills of being active listeners for each other, preparing to go off and take action by actively listening to someone in their life.

Students will Examine

- The variety of emotions that everyone experiences.
- How some emotions feel good, and others feel more uncomfortable.
- How can they be an active listener?

Pre-Activity Prep

- Print and cut the Spark Template ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (SHARE section).
- Print the Worksheet: My Feelings ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Print the Worksheet: Feeling and Emotion Words ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Print and cut the Worksheet: How to be an Active Listener ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (REFLECT section).



MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals
 Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#))
 Spark Template ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: My Feelings ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: Feeling and Emotion Words ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: How to be an Active Listener ([PDF](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Validating sparks](#)
 Read-aloud book: [The Rabbit Listened](#) (3:37)
 (Digging Deeper) Video: [Empathetic Listening](#) (1:45)
 (Digging Deeper) Read-aloud book: [I'm Sad](#) (3:38)

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Spark Template

Each student writes the action(s) they took since the last ThinkGive lesson to care for someone in their support network on a Spark Template ([PDF](#)).

Encourage students to use neat handwriting and outline in marker because their actions will be posted on the Spark Bulletin Board.

Small Group Share

In small groups, students take turns sharing the action(s) they took to care for someone in their support network and how taking their action(s) made them feel.

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 15 minutes

So Many Feelings

Explain: We all experience feelings and emotions all the time. Even though our feelings are important, we do not always think about them.

Ask: What does the word “feelings” mean to you? What are some feelings you know about?

Hand out the Worksheet: My Feelings ([PDF](#)) (1/student).

Explain: What emotion(s) did you feel when you woke up yesterday? Write that feeling in a light purple rectangle, then illustrate that feeling with an emoji face in the circle above. Now, think about how you felt throughout the morning. Write that feeling(s) in another rectangle and illustrate it with an emoji face. Remember the emotions you felt yesterday—in the middle of the day, the afternoon, the evening. Write those down.

Students share one feeling they wrote on their worksheet.

Hand out the Worksheet: Feeling and Emotion Words ([PDF](#)) (1/student).

Explain: Look at the handout with more words describing feelings and emotions. What other feelings have you experienced in your life? Add those feelings to the emoji circles on your worksheet. If you run out of space, add more on the back!

Discuss:

- Do we all feel the same emotions when doing the same things? Why might people experiencing the same situation feel different emotions?
- What emotions feel good? What emotions feel less comfortable?

Explain: We all have many different feelings—and all are okay. There is no such thing as a wrong feeling!



VOCAB

Emotion: noun; a reaction in our mind or body to something that happens around us.

Feeling: noun; sensations we feel in our body from experiencing an emotion.



CONNECTION

Read-aloud book: [Pass It On](#) (2:58) by Sophy Henn.

Encourages readers to pass along their positive experiences and feelings. What are some positive feelings you have experienced? How can sharing a smile or a laugh be a kind action?

DIGGING DEEPER

Watch: I'm Sad (3:38), a read-aloud book by Michael Ian Black. Characters learn that sadness is normal, it can feel good to let yourself feel sad, and everyone uses different strategies to feel better.

Discuss:

- Have you ever felt sad and another feeling simultaneously?
- Why is it okay—and even good—to feel sad sometimes?

REFLECT

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Active Listening

Watch: The Rabbit Listened (3:37), a read-aloud book by Cori Doerrfeld. Taylor's block tower is destroyed. Different animals try to help in various ways, but nothing works until the rabbit sits down and listens to Taylor.

Discuss:

- What were some ways the different animals tried to help Taylor?
- If you were Taylor, which animal would have been most helpful for you? Why?
- Why was the rabbit the one who ended up helping Taylor?

Explain: One way to care for someone is to be a good listener, just like the rabbit was for Taylor. A helpful type of listening is called active listening, which means focusing entirely on the person speaking and using your body to show that you are listening. Active listeners validate the other person's feelings by saying things like, "Tell me more," "That sounds hard," "Thank you for sharing," or "I am always here to listen."

Students form partners (self-selection or assigned) and practice active listening. Each time you announce a quality of an active listener along with a prompting question, one student listens, and one speaks. Students then switch roles with the same quality and prompt. When students are ready, announce the next active listening skill/prompting question.

Prompting Questions + Qualities of an Active Listener:

Speaker: Share a time you felt excited.

Active Listener: Lean forward and look at the speaker.

Speaker: Share about a time you were surprised.

Active Listener: Focus on what the speaker is saying; try not to think about other things.



VOCAB

Active listening: noun; showing someone speaking that you are hearing and understanding what they are saying.

Validate: verb; recognizing that a person's feelings are important and worthwhile.



TEACHER TIP

Students can write the definition of an active listener in their ThinkGive Journals.

Speaker: Describe your favorite food and why you love it.

Active Listener: Do not talk until the person finishes speaking.

Speaker: Describe a time when you did something challenging.

Active Listener: Validate the speaker's feelings with words like, "Tell me more" or "How did that make you feel?"

Speaker: Share about a time when you felt nervous.

Active Listener: Show that you hear and understand what the speaker is saying by using words like, "It sounds like that was hard" or "It seems like you were feeling frustrated."

Discuss:

- How did your partner make you feel listened to?
- How did you feel when you were being listened to?
- Was it easy or challenging to actively listen? Explain.
- Who are some people outside of school who you could support by using your active listening skills?

Hand out the [Worksheet: How to be an Active Listener \(PDF\)](#) (1/student). Students glue them into their ThinkGive Journals for future reference.

DIGGING DEEPER

Watch: [Empathetic Listening](#) (1:45). This clip from the movie Inside Out shows how active and empathetic listening can be more helpful for someone feeling sad than trying to cheer them up.

Define the term empathetic listening.

Discuss:

- Which character's response to Bing Bong was more helpful? Why?
- What did Sadness do and say to help Bing Bong?



VOCAB

Empathetic listening: a way of listening that involves paying attention to the other person's feelings and perspectives.

CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Between now and [next ThinkGive date], be an active listener for someone. Notice how active listening makes the other person feel and how it makes you feel.

Brainstorm

None needed.



THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: small is all
3. Brave: step into your courage zone

Things to Consider




- The ThinkGive focus is on being True. Show authentic interest in someone else's words.
 - Notice your feelings to ensure you are in the right mood to be an active listener.
 - You might learn something new when you are an active listener, even for a good friend.
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Sample Actions

- My mom smiled when she came home. Without interrupting, I focused on what she was telling me about her good day.
- My classmate looked like he was about to cry, so I sat next to him and said I'd be happy to listen if he wanted to share anything.
- I was doing a puzzle when my step-sister asked if she could talk to me. I put down the puzzle and looked at her, and she told me she was nervous about joining her new basketball team.

Student Journal Questions

"Listening is about being present, not just about being quiet." – Krista Tippett. Krista Tippett is an American journalist and author who explores questions about the meaning of the human experience on her podcast, On Being.

-  How is being present different from being quiet?
-  What do you look like when you are present?
-  Do you agree with this quote? Why or why not?

Extensions

DO

Listening Skits

In small groups or partners, students write scripts and act out short scenarios that show active listening.

Discuss:

- How did you come up with your scenario? Is it made up or based on a real experience?
- How do the characters show active listening?

Guess the Emotion

This activity helps students practice reading other people's emotions. Write some feelings on small slips of paper and put them in a bowl or a basket. Pass the basket around. Students choose a slip of paper, keeping it hidden from everyone. Students act out the emotion one by one with only facial expressions and gestures. The rest of the class tries to guess the emotion.

Extensions

WATCH

Video: [Active listening is a skill!](#) (2:15). Explains the steps for active listening—Stop, Breathe, Listen, Respond.

Discuss:

- What message do we give a speaker when we are not good listeners?
- How can our bodies show that we are listening?

Video: [PBS KIDS Talk About | FEELINGS & EMOTIONS!](#) (9:40). Children and their grown-ups talk about their feelings.

Discuss:

- What big feelings have you experienced, and what do you do when those big feelings arise?
- Who in your life do you talk to about your feelings?
- When is it hard to share your feelings?

READ / LISTEN

Read-aloud book: [Listen](#) (4:30) by Gabi Snyder. Explores listening to everything you can and the meaning of listening vs. hearing.

Discuss:

- What are some sounds you hear each day?
- What does it mean to “listen past the noise?”
- What is the difference between hearing and listening?

Read-aloud book: [The Way I Feel](#) (4:03) by Jana Cain. The rhyming words on each page describe common feelings, and the illustrations match; the final message is that all feelings are normal and come and go.

Discuss:

- Which of the feelings have you experienced?
- Why do you think humans experience such a wide range of emotions?