

### OBJECTIVITY 1. FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

**Objective:** Students will learn to apply a focused meditation strategy in conflict situations to achieve a broader and more objective perspective of the situation.

#### WARM UP

Share with your students five things you find relaxing and write them on the board. Encourage them to brainstorm the things they find relaxing and have them come up to the board and write them down. You could make a poster with everyone's ideas and paste it on a classroom wall so students can turn to it whenever they need ideas to relax.

#### STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- 2 Invite students to read and paraphrase why attention techniques are useful. Then tell them to quickly skim the steps for mindful breathing just to become familiar with them and explain that you are going to guide them through the meditation.
- 3 Invite students to sit comfortably on their chairs. Explain that this meditation exercise helps them change their focus of attention so they can regulate their emotions, reduce stress, and be calm enough to find solutions when the process of communication is not working well. If possible, be prepared with relaxing music for meditation so you can play it in the background. Ask them to close their eyes. Read every step on the handout using a relaxed voice. Finally, give them some time to assimilate the experience.
- 4 Get students into groups and ask them to share their experiences with the exercise and to write how they feel in the space provided on the handout.

#### WRAP IT UP

- 5 *Do you think we are able to think straight when we're angry? Do you think this exercise will help you soothe your anger? What differences did you notice in your mental and physical states before and after practicing mindful breathing? How do you think this technique could be helpful in resolving conflicts between peers?*

Ask the students to discuss the questions in small groups. Some volunteers can share their answers with the rest of the class. Point out the importance of focused meditation to handle stressful situations at school (like exams) and also at home. Tell them that it is very important to identify when they need to change their focus of attention so they can deal with negative emotions in a constructive way. Explain that these meditation exercises promote physical and psychological relaxation. Suggest that they repeat this type of meditation whenever they are stressed.

#### TEACHING TIP

If you have not done it before, practice focused meditation at home so you can explain its importance to your students. Remember that when you meditate, your mind is not focused on the events taking place around you. Meditation is a practical way for calming yourself and letting go of negative emotions. Explain that some of the most important benefits of meditation come gradually over time and are not easily observed. Encourage them to persist in their practice.

### OBJECTIVITY 2. ARE YOU A GOOD LISTENER?

**Objective:** Students will learn that paying attention to what others are saying, instead of thinking about what to reply, is the first step for good communication.

#### WARM UP

Divide the class in two groups, A and B. Ask group A to think of their own definition of *hearing* and to come up with two examples of it. Ask group B to think of their own definition of *listening* and to come up with two examples of it. Invite a volunteer from each group to come to the front and share their definition and examples with the rest of the class. Finally, ask the whole class: *Do you think hearing and listening are the same? Why?*

#### STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- 2 Get students into pairs, ask them to read the definition of *active listening*. Invite them to paraphrase it. Then ask them to take a look at the words and phrases in the box. Make sure they understand all of them. Guide them to choose five words from the box that they think belong to each of the couples and write them in the speech bubbles. Invite them to identify which of the two conversations is having a process of active listening. Then elicit from them that the other conversation represents attitudes that we should avoid in a conversation. Finally, invite them to share their answers with another pair.
- 3 Have the class read the tips for active listening out loud and provide help with any questions that come up. Invite pairs to ask each other the questions in the handout and to put into practice the active listening tips. Encourage them not to write their partner's answers but to really pay attention to what he or she says.

- 4 Ask students to complete the diagram individually with their partner's information using just their memory. Once they finish, tell them to get together again to confirm their answers. Give them enough time to discuss the last question in pairs.

#### WRAP IT UP

- 5 *Why do you think it is important to listen to understand? Can you connect with another person if you don't listen to him or her? Why? How is active listening a useful tool for collaborative work?*

Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups. Explain that listening is different from hearing, because it is not something that just happens. Listening is an active process in which we make a conscious decision to understand the message of the person who is speaking. If we learn to focus fully on the speaker, the process of communication will run smoothly and collaborative work will be a success. Point out that active listening means paying attention to another person with empathy (the ability to identify with another's feelings, thoughts, etc., as if they were our own). Answer any questions students may have.

#### TEACHING TIP

Promote active listening by practicing it yourself. Remember that by becoming a better listener you can improve your ability to influence, persuade, and negotiate with your students. Furthermore, you will avoid conflict and misunderstandings. If you or your students find it difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating his or her words mentally; this will reinforce the person's message and help you stay focused. Always keep in mind that active listening involves giving your full attention to the person who is speaking.



## OBJECTIVITY 3. HARMONY IS THE KEY

**Objective:** Students will be able to analyze their role in a team to detect if their participation favors or blocks communication.

### WARM UP

Ask students if they have ever watched a basketball game. Explain that there are different positions: the tallest player is usually the center, the tallest and strongest is the power forward, an agile tall player is the small forward, and the best ball handlers are the shooting guard and the point guard. Point out that every player has a role and that, together, they can win a game. Ask students to give examples of other team sports. Then ask them: *What would happen if one of the team players blocks a harmonious collaboration?*

### STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- 2 Invite students to work in groups of four and ask them to read the definition of *harmony* on the handout and to paraphrase it. Then tell them to remember a recent team project. They have to focus on details such as what the conversations were about, the way they discussed, and the way they reflected on the ideas and reached agreements. Ask: *Did you have a good communication? Was the outcome what you expected?* With everything they thought about, ask them to answer the questions on the handout.
- 3 Invite them to look at the four students on the handout and imagine they are the members of the team from the previous activity. Ask: *What was the role each member played? What was his or her form of expression?* Then ask them to look at the words in the box and designate one to each member of the team and to write an example of their form of expression depending on what they did and how they acted while working on the team. This will help them understand the role everyone played.

- 4 Ask them if they think there was harmony in the teamwork. Invite them to write their answer, and the reasons for it, in the space provided on the handout.

### WRAP IT UP

- 5 *How do you think identifying the different roles in a team can help explain what is blocking communication? What can you do to have more harmonious relationships? How can harmony help you reach your goals?*

Tell students that when a music ensemble plays a melody, the different instruments need to coordinate to reach harmony. If one of the members is out of tune, the whole melody is affected. Something similar happens when your students participate in a team project. Every member contributes with their point of view, ideas, and proposals. If communication gets blocked, it is useful to know who is “out of tune,” and this can be done by identifying the role each member plays in the project. Mention some attitudes for having a harmonious relationship: respect, agreement, and concordance. If communication gets blocked, suggest that they describe again the responsibilities of every member. If the roles within the team are perfectly defined, there would be less of a chance for confusion between the members, something that usually happens when the instruction on the task they have to do is not clear enough.

### TEACHING TIP

Remind students that people who know how to work in a team are people interested in knowing the arguments of others and in recognizing the value of discussing different ideas that produce satisfactory results. They do not try to impose their ideas but to enrich them through the contribution of all the team members. Try to acknowledge your students every time they put this into action. Remember that self-esteem and self-confidence are very important to teenagers.

### OBJECTIVITY 4. ACHIEVEMENTS

**Objective:** Students will understand the importance of identifying achievements, improvements, and qualities in order to become better team players.

#### WARM UP

Write on the board the following sentence: *I am responsible for my actions.* Give students a few minutes to brainstorm how this statement is true and why. Then ask some volunteers to come and write them on the board.

#### STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- 2 Write on the board the following words: *achievement, improvement, and quality.* Get students into groups and have them read and paraphrase the definitions in the handout. Tell them to label each definition with a word from the board. Encourage volunteers to share their answers with the class and to explain the reasons behind their answer.
- 3 Explain that this activity helps them reflect on teamwork on a personal level. Mention that when we become aware of our qualities, we automatically become better team players because we take advantage of each member's qualities to improve our performance as a team. Tell students to remember a team project they have worked in recently and to complete the table individually thinking of their achievements, improvements, and qualities not only as a team but also on a personal level.
- 4 Have students share their tables with their group. Encourage groups to listen attentively to their classmates and to give and receive feedback respectfully. Tell students to add any information they may have missed in their tables.

#### WRAP IT UP

- 5 *Why is it important to reflect upon our work on a personal level and as a team? Why is it important to recognize our achievements? Do you think that thinking on the positive and negative aspects of working in teams helps you be a better team player?*

Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups. Guide them to recognize that acknowledging everybody's qualities, improvements, and achievements is important for teamwork because it fosters personal improvement. Ask: *What would happen if we didn't know what we can and cannot do?* Then mention that common goals could not be reached if nobody knew what each team member is able to do. Finally, invite students to think of their achievements and how they have improved project after project. Encourage them to be convinced that personal improvement is a constant process and that being self-conscious is the first step towards it.

#### TEACHING TIP

Recognizing your students' achievements is a core skill you need to put into practice so that your students know that you care about each one of them and that you take notice of their effort. On the other hand, you have a wide variety of options to improve your performance as a teacher. Try doing this activity reflecting on your qualities, improvements, and achievements as a teacher. You may discover that there are some areas where you could improve to help your students succeed.