



Exercise:

Distinguishing Acknowledgment from Agreement

Because every individual has different needs and views, negative emotions in the workplace can never be avoided completely. Effective listening can help managers better problem-solve and generate solutions that come closer to meeting everyone's needs. Listen first and acknowledge and validate what you hear – even if you don't agree with it – before expressing your point of view. When you acknowledge a worker's perspective, it can send a strong signal that although you may or may not agree, and may or may not take action accordingly, you have heard the viewpoint and are taking it into consideration.

Acknowledging that someone else's feelings are valid for them, even when you do not feel the same way, can allow your communication partner to feel heard and therefore better able to listen. Some managers may be apprehensive that actually acknowledging a perspective ties their hands by creating a responsibility to respond in a certain way. This is not generally true. Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings still leaves you with the following options:

- Agreeing or disagreeing with the person's point of view or actions
- Informing them that a request cannot be granted, but that you are willing to explore other ways to meet the same need
- Further exploring and discussing the matter under consideration

Practice acknowledging workers' ideas and requests. Make sure to do so in a way that cannot be confused for agreement unless you do, in fact, agree. Monitor workers' responses and compare them to responses when their viewpoints remain unacknowledged.