



Active listening and empathy are two fundamental skills in conducting a coaching interview, especially with LGBTQ+ individuals. Beyond mere listening, it involves a genuine stance of openness, profound understanding, and receptivity to the other person.

Active listening involves being fully present to the person, without getting distracted by one's own thoughts or judgments. This involves sustained attention to verbal and non-verbal language, chosen words, expressed emotions, but also silences and unspoken issues. The coach must absorb the entirety of the message, beyond mere informational content. Techniques such as paraphrasing, prompts, and open-ended questions can demonstrate attentive listening and facilitate exploration.

For example, if the person discusses a difficult coming-out situation, the coach can paraphrase: "If I understand correctly, announcing your homosexuality to your parents was a very trying time for you". This shows that the message has been heard and encourages further discussion.

Empathy is the ability to put oneself in the other's shoes, to understand their lived experiences, emotions, and frame of reference, without completely identifying with them. It's a form of emotional resonance that allows for the creation of a deep and authentic connection. Empathy involves acknowledging and accepting the other's emotions, even uncomfortable ones, without trying to minimize or judge them.

In response to a transgender person expressing their pain in the face of discrimination, the coach can demonstrate empathy by saying, "I can imagine how painful and unfair it must be to experience these situations. I am moved by what you're going through." This creates a feeling of understanding and support.

For LGBTQ+ individuals, empathetic listening is particularly important as they often have experienced rejection, misunderstanding or judgment. Facing a coach who listens with respect and kindness, who sincerely seeks to understand without judgment, can be a healing experience. It creates the conditions for an authentic dialogue where the person can share deeply.

However, empathy does not mean endorsing all behaviors or being perpetually indulgent. The coach sometimes needs to confront the individual with their contradictions or areas of avoidance. But this always needs to be done in an empathetic atmosphere, seeking to understand resistances.

Active and empathetic listening is an inner stance rooted in a fundamentally positive view of human beings. It involves believing in everyone's ability to find their own solutions, to tap into their resources. The coach is not there to judge or advise but to create the conditions for independent reflection.

Practically, the coach can demonstrate their listening and empathy through non-verbal cues like a kind gaze, a gentle voice tone, nods of understanding. They can also verbalize their feelings and observations: "I sense a lot of sadness in your words" or "I perceive a great strength in you despite these trials".

In summary, active and empathetic listening lies at the heart of coaching. It's more of a being-than-a-doing, requiring self-work and significant emotional maturity. Deeply listened to and understood, the individual can unleash their potential and move towards their goal. For LGBTQ+ individuals who have experienced wounds and rejection, offering this quality of presence is a powerful change factor.

Points to remember:

- Active listening and empathy are two key coaching skills, particularly with LGBTQ+ individuals who may have experienced rejection and misunderstanding.
- Active listening involves sustained attention, beyond words, using paraphrasing, prompting, and open-ended questions.
- Empathy is the ability to understand another's experience without judgment, welcoming their emotions. It creates an authentic connection.
- Empathetic listening allows for deep and healing dialogue where the person can share in confidence.
- Empathy does not exclude confronting the person kindly if necessary.

- Active and empathetic listening reflects a positive view of human beings and their ability to find their own solutions.
- The coach demonstrates listening and empathy through their non-verbal attitude and tactfully verbalizing their feelings.
- More than a technique, empathetic listening is an inner posture that requires self-work and emotional maturity.
- Feeling deeply listened to and understood, the person can unleash their potential and move forward. This is a powerful change factor.