

# Acknowledging



*"[This] ... is not a means to control the conversation or the outcome. Rather, it has transformed my approach to group problem solving by truly believing that the best answer lies in those around me and not always within myself."*

– Mike Whalen, PlayCare, LLC

## Acknowledging

(v.) To let a person know that you truly listened and care about what they've said

### Why Acknowledge?

- Focus the conversation on what the person says
  - Clarify what you heard the person say
- Build connection and a foundation for empathy
- Understand WHY the person is telling you what they are telling you
- Develop a common understanding

### Techniques For Acknowledging

#### Goal:

- Summarize, paraphrase, reiterate, or mirror what was said
- Encourage, accept, or explore and reinforce the person's emotions/perceptions/concerns/beliefs
- Bottom-line or restate the essence of what the person is communicating

#### Acknowledging Starters:

- So when you \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ happens.
- To check my understanding ...
- What I'm hearing you say is ...
- Let me play that back to you, to be sure I got it.
- In other words ...
- So ...

# Acknowledging Activity

For this activity, work with a partner to listen and acknowledge the situation they're sharing.

## Step 1

### Partner 1:

Share a situation that has been challenging recently.

### Partner 2:

Listen to your partner and ask questions to clarify what he/she is sharing.

- You may only listen or ask questions.
  - You can clarify by saying things like:  
“What else?, Tell me more..., Help me understand better..., Trying to go deeper...”
- You may not share your advice, share your experiences, or insert your point of view.

## Step 2

### Partner 2:

Acknowledge what you heard from Partner 1.

### Partner 1:

Share feedback with Partner 2 on how the acknowledgement captured or did not capture your intended message. Repeat as needed until both partners feel like there is clarity around the message.

## Step 3

Switch roles and repeat steps 1 and 2 of the activity. Reflect on challenges and opportunities you experienced during the activity:

- What was hard about the activity?
- What did it feel like to acknowledge a situation you haven't been through?
- What did you learn through this activity? About yourself or your partner?

Start a conversation to learn how you can discover more ways to grow your leadership.

[www.aileron.org/discovery/](http://www.aileron.org/discovery/)

Adapted from Aileron's [Becoming a More Conscious Leader](#) Program