



## ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATION

### Warm Up Activity – “One Minute Monologue”

**Directions:** Come up with a fair system for taking turns doing *one-minute monologues* either by allowing people to volunteer or if the group is comfortable enough just have everyone take turns

When it is your turn, pick a simple, general type of subject and get ready to give a monologue. Someone else should have a timer ready on their cell phone or just by watching a clock with a second hand. Once the person with the timer says “Go!” the person doing the one-minute monologue should speak openly on the subject until one full minute is up with **no interruptions** from anyone else in the room for the entire minute.

You can use your own subjects or some suggestions to pick from are:

- Addiction
- Love
- “Men”
- “Women”
- Anger
- Fear
- Success
- Inspiration
- Motivation
- Insanity
- Peace
- “Deal Breaker”
- Betrayal
- Loyalty
- Insecurity
- Life-Changing
- Hope

People in the group should do their best to **listen** and **pay attention** during each monologue. Try to think about whether or not you agree or disagree with some of the points the speaker is making during his or her monologue

Stop for a few minutes in between each monologue to allow the other group members in the audience to ask a few questions and make a comment or two about the monologue.

Continue to do one minute monologues until either everyone gets a turn or two, or if it feels like enough time has passed to move on to the Final Process section below:

### **Process/Final Discussion:**

Once all of the monologues are done, it is important to keep in mind the following:

- *The purpose of this activity was to discuss **attention and concentration**.*
- The monologues themselves are not the main focus of this exercise, but rather each monologue was an opportunity for group members to look at their ***attention and concentration*** levels



**Discuss the following as a group:**

1. **Think about yourself as a listener:** Think about what it was like to listen to other people's monologues. Discuss each item below, one by one, as a group, sharing whether or not each area is true or not true for you:
  - I found myself wanting to interrupt the speaker
  - My mind wandered more often than I would have liked it too
  - I found myself looking at the person speaking and thinking about their looks, or their clothes or other distractions, instead of really focusing on what they were saying
  - Even though this may sound mean, quite often I can remember myself wishing the speaker would just stop talking because listening was tough
  - I looked the speaker in the eye a good amount of the time
  - I spent some of time thinking of counter-arguments to statements that I didn't agree with, which affected my ability to listen effectively
  - Soon after the minute was up, most of the time I forgot most of what the speaker had said
  - I feel like I get bored pretty easily regardless of who was talking
  - I found most of the monologues to be interesting
  - This activity was challenging for me as I realize I need improvement with my listening skills
  - This activity was not challenging for me as I feel like I am a good listener
  
2. **Rate the group when you were the speaker:** If you did a monologue, what did you think of your audience?
  - When I was doing my monologue I got the feeling that most people were paying attention
  - When I was doing my monologue it felt like at least some people were listening but I lost a few
  - When I was doing my monologue I felt like I was speaking to a room full of goldfish\*  
\*Internet folklore states that the average attention span of a goldfish is 9 seconds





## Final Assessment: Do I Have an Issue with Attention and Concentration?

### Some things to consider:

- **What is ADHD?** – Most people know a good amount about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD, sometimes just referred to as ADD) Without getting too much into the diagnostic criteria of ADHD, some of the signs and symptoms of ADHD (primarily inattentive) are:
  - **Difficulty focusing, listening or concentrating**
  - **Distractibility**
  - **Disorganization**
  - **Impulsivity**
  - **Restlessness**
  - **Struggling to complete tasks**
  - **“Zoning out” in the middle of things**
- **Many people feel that ADHD is over-diagnosed.** In reality, there are people diagnosed with ADHD who probably should not be, but don't forget that there are also people who really do have undiagnosed ADHD but may not even realize it.
- **Attention and concentration problems do not necessarily mean that you have ADHD:** Attention and concentration issues can be a symptom of another mental health issue. The following mental health disorders are often be linked with difficulties concentrating, focusing and paying attention:
  - **Bipolar Disorder**
  - **Anxiety Disorders**
  - **Depressive Disorders**
  - **Other Learning Disabilities**
  - **Oppositional-Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder**

### Coping with Attention and Concentration Issues

Whether someone has ADHD or another reason for experiencing attention and concentration issues, for some individuals there may always be some degree of challenge to concentrating, focusing and listening.

Oo look, a squirrel:





## Back on Topic: Coping with Attention and Concentration Issues:

Just because someone may have attention and concentration issues, that does not mean that he or she cannot improve their ability to focus, pay attention and concentrate with time. **You can improve if you try.**

### ***Some basic skills and other things to consider when trying to improve attention and concentration:***

1. Learn to practice **Active Listening**. There are several definitions of active listening, however the main point of active listening is that it involves more than just listening; **Active listening** includes putting aside one's own thoughts in order to increase focus on the meaning behind what others are saying. Active listening is an essential part of effective communication because when done correctly, the person speaking should walk away from the conversation feeling understood, respected, and accepted

#### ***Questions for Discussion:***

- ❖ *Can you recall a time when you were speaking to someone and that person was acting like they were listening, but you could just tell that they really weren't? (This is often true when talking to children)*
- ❖ *Is there anyone in your life that would describe talking to YOU the same way as in the previous question?*

#### **Some Key Skills for Active Listening:**

- ✚ **Reflect:** When actively listening, at key points in a conversation practice reflecting back to the speaker what you heard them say: See example of reflection in active listening below:

**Boss:** "I want you to keep a close eye on the cash registers this evening because the past few shifts, things have not been adding up properly at the end of the night"

**Employee (Using Active Listening - Reflecting)** – "Tonight you want me to carefully watch the registers so that we don't come up short"

**Boss: (Pleased, feeling listened to)** "Exactly!"

- ✚ **Fight Mental Urges:**

- Resist the urge to change the topic when someone else is talking
- Fight the urge to switch the focus of the conversation to yourself
- Forgo the temptation to try to think about what you want to say as the other person is talking

- ✚ **Picture** – Forming a mental picture of what the speaker is saying can help you concentrate

- ✚ **Practice Eye Contact** – The less you look around when others are talking, the less the likelihood that you may get distracted

2. If you suffer from attention and concentration issues, practice **organizing** ahead of time

- ✚ **Make Lists** – Check lists and "to do" lists are simple but highly effective tools
- ✚ **Use Technology** – Electronic calendars, organizers, reminders, schedules, etc. can be great
- ✚ **Practice Time Management and Prioritization:** Learn not to "wing it" but instead set priorities for the efficient use of your time. Set aside a good amount of time to "put first things first"

3. **Medication** – This is a tricky one because some ADHD medications can be habit-forming but with persistent attention and concentration issues it may be necessary to consult a psychiatrist

**FINAL DISCUSSION: Specifically, which of these areas do you think you need to consider or work on?**