Observations
(Watch Carefully)

**Objective:** To introduce observation and listening as the two basic skills of research that we use every day.

To use categories to create a representation of the many factors involved in observation.

**Time:** 90 minutes

**How many:** Whole Group

**Materials:** Scrap Paper, Flip chart/Markers, Props for Creating a Scene, like a radio for sound effects, DVD with a scene that you have pre-screened, with 10 questions about it.

**Source:** Participatory Action Research: Curriculum for Empowering Youth

**Set-Up:** Rent a video and screen it ahead of time to select one 10-15 minute scene to be shown for the activity. The film should be one that teens would be interested in, but not one that they might have seen multiple times, otherwise they will already be familiar with the movie and the objective of the activity will be lost.

Develop a list of 10 questions based on the clip that you choose. Include questions that require listening as well as observational skills. In particular observations: about behaviors, environment, and interactions along with physical characteristics.

Make a list of you own observations that you can refer to during the processing part of this activity.

**Enroll:** Ask the class to write in their journals the answers to the following questions:

- How do they use their observation and listening, or research skills every day? How do they gather information about their environments?
- Why do they use their observation and listening skills to gather information about their environments? (To do something, gain something, make friends, figure out what to avoid, and how to position ourselves in our environment for safety, friendship, survival, and growth.)
**Do/Experience:** Show the group a 10-15 minute clip of a movie with the instruction to observe and listen as closely as possible and to gather as much information and observe as many details about what is going on as they can. Encourage youth to write down notes as they watch the movie.

Once the clip is finished, tell the group that you are going to test them on their observation skills. Ask the group to write down the answers to a set of questions that you have developed from pre-screening the movie. These answers should be recorded individually on paper first, and then shared as a group. Even though participants will think they have watched the video closely, some of the questions should stump them. Once everyone has shared their answers, let them know what the correct answers are.

After the sharing is over, ask the group to report as many other things they saw and heard from the video as they can remember. List these on a flipchart and post the pages in the room so the group can see them.

**Categorizing Observations:**
Help the group to categorize their observations in some way. Initially, the facilitator should ask for the group to do this independently. If the group gets stuck, the facilitator can read items off the list and ask how they might be categorized. The categorization may also include cultural domains such as sports, food, risks, drugs, friends, etc. This categorization scheme will be referred to during the demonstration part of the lesson.

**Process:**
What did you learn about listening and how to listen, about observing and how to observe?
Did you have any problems doing either one or the other? Did you prefer doing one or the other?
What did you learn from, listening or observing?
Who took notes? Does it make a difference when you take notes or not?
If this was a onetime event that you didn’t record it, you can’t revisit what proof do you have that it really happened?
In this instance, you mostly had to watch and listen. If you had actually been in this scene, how could you use your other senses to gather information?

**Label:**
The two most important research skills are observation and listening. We don’t always see as much as we think we do. People will notice particular things, but not others. For example, someone who is musically gifted may be more apt to notice the background music while someone who is athletic will notice the basketball game going on in the background.
Getting accurate information is a problem that comes up in real life, and in field research.

**Demonstrate**: Split the youth into smaller groups of 4-5 youth. Tell them that it is their job now to create a scene. First they are to pick a theme – a party, the beach, a bowling lane, camping in the woods, etc. Then using the categorization scheme they have developed in the first part, they are to build that scene, using props, background noise, etc. Each group should plan together, then divide up the roles and responsibilities and plan out their scene for presentation to the other groups.

Have each group perform its scene.

After each scene, ask: What components of the categorization scheme did each group include and how?

**Review**: Was it difficult to take in everything that was going on? Why or why not? Did all of the pieces fit into a whole or was the scene fragmented? Does this ever happen in real life (i.e. pieces not fitting together and being fragmented)?

**Celebrate**: Ask students to share one observation of today's class that they enjoyed most.