

Do You See What I'm Saying?



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Some Thoughts on Listening

“The deepest need of the human heart is to be understood” - Stephen Covey

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING:

Listening With Our Ears is *Not* Enough

Communication is 7% words, 40% tone and feeling behind words, 53% body language. Listening requires more than just our ears!!

When we are listened to we feel:

- We are taken seriously
- Our ideas and feelings are known
- And, ultimately, what we have to say matters

When we *don't* actively listen to others, we send a message that says:

- I don't take you seriously
- Your ideas and feelings don't matter
- You have no say in matters

Listening in the Workplace

- It is estimated that more than 50% of our work time is spent listening.
- Immediately following a 10-minute presentation the average person retains about 50% of what they hear. 48 hours later it will only be 25%.
- 60% of all management problems are related to listening.
- We misinterpret, misunderstand or change 70 to 90% of what we hear.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE LISTENING

1. We listen at about 100-125 WPM, but we think at 500-800 words per minute
2. With a 400-700 word processing difference, our mind can create barriers such as:
 - Thinking how to respond or interrupt what is being said
 - Become bored and fake attention
 - Become judgmental about what is being said or how it is being said
 - Become emotional if something said touches a hot button
 - Become distracted – watching clock, tapping pencil, doodling, other people
 - Jump to conclusions before the facts are out
 - Tune out the conversation

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO LISTENING

1. Be quiet
2. Listen to understand, not to respond
3. Maintain eye contact
4. Ask questions to help you understand:
 - What I heard you say was... is that correct?

Note – You don't have to agree with someone's perspective, but you should try to understand it.

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- If I understand you correctly, your concern

LISTENING HABITS THAT IRRITATE YOU

Instructions: Following are statements which describe behavior people sometimes find irritating. Check the five listening habits that are most irritating to you – those five that really make you feel the other person is not “really listening.”

- ___ 1. The other person interrupts me when I talk.
- ___ 2. The other person never looks at me when I talk.
- ___ 3. The other person continually fidgets with a pencil, a paper, or something, looks at it and examines it rather than listens to me.
- ___ 4. The other person is always trying to get ahead of my story and guess what my point is, sometimes even finishing my sentences for me.
- ___ 5. Whenever I make a suggestion, the other person always throws water on it.
- ___ 6. The other person argues with everything I say even before I have a chance to finish stating my case.
- ___ 7. Everything I say reminds the other person of a personal experience or a recent happening. They continually interrupt with, “That reminds me.....”
- ___ 8. The other person sits there picking hangnails, clipping fingernails, cleaning glasses, etc. while I am trying to talk.
- ___ 9. The other person inserts humorous remarks when I am trying to be serious.
- ___ 10. The other person just seems to be waiting for me to get through talking so they can jump in and say something.
- ___ 11. The other person overdoes being attentive – too many nods of the head, or “um-ums” or “uh-huhs”.
- ___ 12. Frequently looks at clock or watch while I am talking.
- ___ 13. The other person ask questions that demand agreement such as “Don’t you think so” or, “Don’t you agree?”
- ___ 14. Takes phone calls during our conversation.
- ___ 15. “Text messages” others while conversing with me.
- ___ 16. Always has an answer even if I’m not looking for one such as “What you need to do is.....”
- ___ 17. Maintains a blank expression.
- ___ 18. Doodles or draws while I talk.

Tips on Becoming an Effective Listener

1. **Stop Talking** – Yours ears are connected to your mouth. When the mouth is open, the ears are less effective.
2. **Give the speaker your undivided attention** – It takes less time to hear it correctly the first time than it does to have someone repeat the information. Tapping of pens, fingers, watching the clock, looking at your computer screen, listening to an iPod, etc. interrupt your listening and show disrespect.
3. **Don't interrupt** – When people present an idea that stimulates our thinking we often want to rush in to make a point. Wait. Allow the person to finish their thought. It shows respect and helps you to gain understanding.
4. **Defer judgment** - This can be challenging. The appearance of a person, how they speak or if the issue is controversial can all send thoughts spinning in our brains and detract from our listening. Remember, paying attention does not mean you are in agreement. It only means you are trying to understand.
5. **Body language** – your non-verbal cues speak volumes. Making eye contact, a nod every now and then shows you are paying attention and paying respect. Rolling of eyes and shaking of head in disapproval are not appropriate.
6. **Ask questions or rephrase when appropriate** - Asking questions that will deepen your understanding. Make sure your questions are not judgmental, for example:
 - a. *What I am hearing you say is..... Is this correct?* As opposed to *“What you said was.....”* The first is asking to understand, the second is not a question but a statement of judgment based on your understanding, which may or may not be correct.
 - b. *“It sounds like you are angry about this situation?”* As opposed to: *“Don’t you think your overacting to this situation?”* The first is an affirmation about how the person is feeling. The second is a judgment based on your opinion. One seeks to understand, the other can be inflammatory.
7. **Be open to paradigm shifts** – In other words, new information gained by listening can change how you view something. Seeing an issue in a new way and responding appropriately doesn't mean “giving in.” It's a sign of higher order thinking!

A note: Responding appropriately could mean you have changed your view, it may also mean that your view has not changed. Remember, listening to understand does not mean you are agreeing, only that you are trying to increase understanding. So how do you state a point of disagreement without being disagreeable? Here's one example:

“What you have told me has helped me understand why you feel this way. I do see it somewhat differently. May I explain why?”